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THE
PRIDE OF ANCESTRY:

OR,
WHO IS SHE?

A Novel,
IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY MRS. THOMSON,

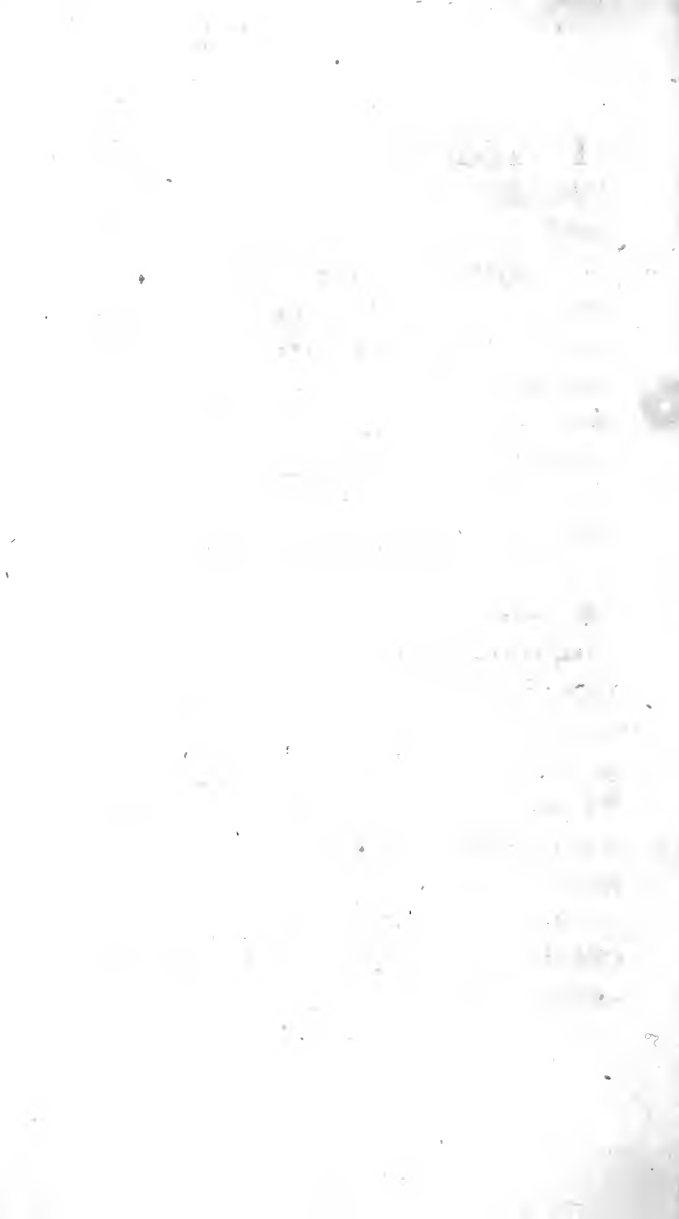
AUTHOR OF

EXCESSIVE SENSIBILITY — FATAL FOLLIES —
THE LABYRINTHS OF LIFE — GERALDINE —
AND ROBERT AND ADELA, &c.

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THE

PRIDE OF ANCESTRY;

OR,

WHO IS SHE?

CHAPTER X.

AFTER the usual forms and ceremonies attendant on such a tour, the Earl and Countess of Clifden arrived in town, and took up their abode in one of the most fashionable hotels, till all the proper arrangements were made which ought to have preceded their union. A proper letter was dispatched from the fond couple to Carleton, to deprecate the wrath of papa, joined to a request that he

VOL. II.

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would

would permit her Ladyship's sisters to join her.

Lord Clifden also wrote to Miss Moore, requesting her to use her endeavours towards reconciling their good father to a union which had mutually sealed the future happiness of them both. He added, that he counted something on the good-nature and persuasive smiles of Miss Bellingham, if she would assail the old gentleman with these irresistible weapons.

No sooner were the letters received than the ladies set about the good work of peace making. Their visit to Mr. Allright was not an unsuccessful one. He had before determined to forgive what it was now out of his power to prevent, and conceived this to be an excellent opportunity to shew Miss Moore what influence her entreaties had over him ; so in due time he softened so far as to say that
he

he would see Lady Clifden, though at present he could not cordially forgive her.

Both Helen and Miss Archer used their utmost endeavours for a reconciliation. Miss Bellingham went so far as to request pen and paper, and wrote, in Mr. Allright's presence, a very pressing invitation to the Earl and Countess to honour her house with a visit for a few days, and said she would promise to make them ample amends for their acceding to her request.

This she sealed and sent off with another from Miss Moore, who wrote as soon as she returned home. She advised them to come to Carleton, and that all would be well she did not doubt.

In half an hour after the arrival of the letters, a chaise and four was at the door of the hotel ! and at twelve

the same night they reached the Lodge.

The ladies were retired ; but nothing could prevent them from welcoming the bride, to whom they communicated the most happy presages. After a short time spent in congratulations, they separated.

Miss Bellingham did not forget her promise to Mrs. Lavington ; for late as it was, the ringers were summoned, and a hearty peal announced the arrival of her guests to the family at the Grove and the surrounding neighbourhood.

Before breakfast the next morning, Frank Allright came to enquire for his sisters. Lord Clifden and he were soon friends ; for indeed there had never been any quarrel. His Lordship wrote, and requested permission to wait on Mr. Allright. To this he assented, and Frank and his Lordship departed

departed for the Grove, whilst her Ladyship was employed in giving the young ladies an account of her adventures during her journey to the North. They were much surprized at her great flow of spirits and unconcern when she was so soon to meet a justly offended father.

Helen asked her if she had no palpitations on the subject?—She said, no, indeed, her father might thank her for giving him such a son-in-law.

Lord Clifden staid sometime at the Grove, as he was closeted alone with Mr. Allright; but no one knew what passed during the conference. The ladies were most anxious to be introduced to their brother. Mr. Allright presented them in due form, and the carriage was ordered that they might return with him to the Lodge. Mr. Allright did not go himself:—It had been agreed on that Lady Clifden

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should

should return with her Lord to the Grove when her sisters came home.

Miss Moore would not hear of this, so she and Lord and Lady Clifden paid the reconciliatory visit, and brought Mr. Allright back to the Lodge, where the day was spent in the happiest manner. Helen gave orders to entertain all that came, as she considered herself as doing proper honour to the rightful heir of that she possessed.—And as had been before determined, with the assent of her guardians, she on this day took an opportunity of presenting a very handsome sum to Lady Clifden, saying, that she knew, had Lady Levet lived to see his Lordship so happily married, she would not have been forgetful that his Lordship was her relation.

When Lady Clifden related the circumstance to her Lord, he was not so certain

certain as Miss Bellingham, that her Ladyship would have considered his union in so happy a point of view. But the present supply came at so important a juncture, that it served to raise his Lordship's spirits, which had not been observed to have assumed any great elevation, although a perfect reconciliation had taken place with the family at the Grove.

It was agreed, that the next morning they should depart for the metropolis, in order to prepare for a fashionable *entré* into fashionable life. His Lordship found, that he could not extort any considerable sum out of the old Cit ; but that he must let circumstances, and the influence his daughter might possess over him, do what he could not. He had now attentively examined the manners and propensities of his lady ; for he had no opportunity of knowing more than what

her outward form displayed to the whole world in common with himself before they were man and wife. He did not perceive much of the amiable in her disposition, though he saw that she would easily yield to the ridiculous, and that show and frivolity would be her first pursuit ; and in this he determined not to check her, as her follies would or might be a means of bringing the father to some accommodation. At present he had only agreed to buy off a mortgage his friend in the city had on a part of the estate of the young Earl. This would place about one thousand per annum within their reach.

The old Cit thought that if they chose to live in the country, or on the continent, this might do, and if he saw them acting prudently, why Lousia should not be forgotten in the disposal of his fortune ; but no more money at
the

the present time. His fortune was not to be squandered to pay off old debts. This determination did not at all discompose either the Earl or the Countess; the latter of whom thought that all happiness was centred in being the wife of an Earl, and looking down on people without a title. She had a list in her own memory of mistresses and misses, who were to be humbled whenever they met, and with this pleasure in view was at present contented.

It was soon rumoured about town, and blazoned in every newspaper, that Lord Clifden had eloped with the eldest daughter of old Allright, the great city banker, and every tradesman to whom his Lordship was indebted, now counted on receiving a check on the house in St. Mary Axe. Considering the old account as cleared off, they were all in readiness to wait

on her Ladyship as soon as she arrived, to solicit her continued patronage. She readily promised to continue them, and they all returned home in great spirits, loaded with orders and encomiums on her Ladyship's taste and spirit.

Lord Clifden now found that his credit was quite renovated; and, though he had determined, if ever in his power, to retrench; yet he could not see the avenues reopened to extravagance without again launching into every folly he had determined to abandon.

Of what use was thought? it only served to render a man unpleasant to himself and all around him, so he would enjoy the present good. To be cooped up in an old family mansion was not to the taste of either Lord or Lady Clifden, so he determined to make the most of the world and its pleasures,

pleasures, and her Ladyship, he did not doubt, would do the same. He was by no means emulous that they should share those of each other, but wished each to be amused their own way.

He was not at all satisfied with himself, but in his situation any change must be for the better, for all expedients had been exhausted, except the matrimonial one just adopted, and that seemed to have answered the purpose very well. Tradesmen, he found, might still be amused, though his Lordship had lost the power until this last expedient.

The Countess, before she left Carleton, had obtained a promise of a visit from Miss Bellingham, as soon as her family arrangements were made. Her Ladyship, as well as her father, thought the young heiress not a bad object of attention. Miss Moore,

also, had been invited by the Earl, and had accepted the invitation, as Miss Bellingham was thought too young to form any town establishment, and this visit would amuse her, and give her the *entré* into the great world. Miss Moore took great pains to describe to Helen the kind of people she would meet every where. She was surprized to find that society stood on so loose a footing, and that any thing like sincerity and truth must not be looked for; that to make yourself entertaining and agreeable for the time being was all that was expected; and that though all were your dearest friends while present, yet, your back once turned, they could discover and blazon your failings with unsparing censure.

Helen said, that she did not like the picture drawn by Miss Moore, and would rather spend her life in a secluded

secluded village with a few real friends than live so artificial a life.

Caroline Archer did not agree with her friend—for London must be delightful, and she heaving a sigh, envied her friend the near prospect of entering into all those gay and enlivening scenes whilst she must sit at home, contented with now and then a sober visit. However, that she should hear from her what was going on, she did not doubt. Helen promised to give her a faithful recital, and that as soon as she became mistress of a house of her own, she should join in all the pleasures of the metropolis.

The Allright family were now very frequent in their calls at the Lodge. The two ladies were busily preparing for attendance on Lady Clifden, and their father was most attentive to Miss Moore, so much so that this
lady

lady could not mistake his meaning ; though she avoided any conversation that might lead to an *eclaircissement*. Miss Allrights enumerated all the vast delights they were just going to enjoy to Caroline, and then deplored that she was not to be of the party ; excusing their sister from the imputation of neglecting her, by saying that they did not doubt but she would have gone of the party if there had been room in the house.

Mr. Allright being in one of his gayest humours, declared that if Mrs. Archer would consent ; she should make one of his family-party. This caused great joy both to Caroline and Helen, who were sorry that the day of parting so soon approached. Miss Bellingham undertook to procure Mrs. Archer's leave for her daughter's going to town with the young ladies, who in truth were not at all pleased to have so
much

much beauty of their party. Miss Allright said it would give her much pleasure, as she should not be at home herself, that her sister had a companion. Caroline was obliged to take this as a compliment, though none of the most gracious kind.

They fixed on that day week for their departure from Carleton. The intermediate time was spent in preparation and taking leave of their country friends. Mrs. Lavington did not stay for this, but removed herself to Harley-street, immediately on the elopement, in order to offer her house as an asylum to her charming Countess, though she had not made her the confidante of her sudden attachment. She had been greatly disappointed, for immediately as she was informed of their arrival in town, she went to the hotel, at which they had slept in all the sympathy of tender friendship, and
was

was there informed, that about an hour before the family had set off for Carleton. To Carleton she could not follow them, but consoled herself in the idea that the reception they would there meet with would not long detain them. She left orders the moment they returned her card should be given Lady Clifden, together with an invitation to use her house as their own until old Inexorable could be brought about.

Miss Moore saw, with extreme concern, the dreadful career of folly, the volatile and giddy disposition of Lord Clifden and his Lady were just entering upon ; nor could she conceive why his Lordship had so suddenly united himself to a lady with whom he had scarcely formed an acquaintance. She had heard that he was greatly involved in his circumstances, but never conjectured how deeply he
was

was so ; nor did she see how he had bettered himself by this union, as by his elopement he had left himself in the power of his father-in-law, who, it was well known, never failed to make an advantageous bargain. But she was greatly rejoiced that he had not paid his addresses to Miss Bellingham, who might have been dazzled by a title to have given her affections and fortune to one who, in all probability, would have abused them both. She saw much danger to her young friend in this visit to the metropolis ; but as she must encounter the world and its varieties sometime, why it was useless to delay the trial. To fortify her young mind by the best caution and advice in her power she determined. Helen had a solidity in her disposition that corrected the lively sallies of her fancy whenever she took time for a moment's thought, and on
this

this Miss Moore placed considerable dependance. She would rather that Caroline had gone home to her mother, as the volatility of her disposition needed the restraint of a parent. However, she was not to be her guardian, and thus a considerable weight was off her mind—not but she felt a considerable interest in her welfare, and would have done much to preserve her from danger.

Dr. Jackson also employed much conversation to prepare his young charge for her entrance into life. “Do not imagine,” he would say to her, “that any little folly will be looked over, and excused on account of your youth. In this season your character will be determined; then beware what seal you affix to it.

“I remember a sentiment I met with in the course of my reading, with the truth of which I was forcibly struck.
The

The moment you discover your faults is the one that determines your character, since you must ultimately sink under that you do not determine to rise above. The world, my young friend, is a book open for your study, in which you will find many specious deceptions, together with many good and great examples. You must learn to discriminate. Suppose you and I open a correspondence, it will serve to fill up a portion of that idie time so distressing to many ladies, besides being a gratification to us to hear that you are well, and how you are amused."

Helen assured the Doctor that nothing could make her so happy as to hear from him. She could not suppose her letters would be worth his perusal; but if he thought so, she would gladly do her best for his entertainment.

Caroline's mother returned a favourable answer to the invitation of Mr.

Allright,

Allright, and all was soon arranged for the journey, which was performed without any adventure or accident worth notice.

On the same day the ladies at the Lodge arrived in Grosvenor-street, the ladies at the Grove arrived at St. Mary Axe, and in about two hours after they all met at Lord Clifden's, whose house bore the marks of extreme opulence. Instead of that of a decayed fortune, every thing was in the first style, and her Ladyship was in the highest spirits imaginable. His Lordship just staid at home to welcome Miss Bellingham, and then drove to the opera, leaving Lady Clifden to receive her city family if they came that evening. However, she made her excuses to her father, saying that her Lord had no idea of his calling till the nexr day.

Mr. Allright surveyed the mansion
and

and its appendages with no small surprise; and when his daughter asked him how he liked her taste, he answered, with a question which she did not at all approve, “Who is to pay for it?”—“Lord, Sir! nobody answers such interrogatories on this side Temple Bar.” “Don’t they indeed!—I’ll bet you what you will, if ever the fools who trust you are paid, they must come on the other side Temple Bar for the money.” To this her Ladyship answered with a smile of approbation; construing this into a sort of promise that he would advance the cash; and this speech was of more use in this house than many speeches of more import in another; for her Ladyship related it to her woman when she attended her to undress, and she related it to all the tradesmen, that the banker was so delighted with the taste of his daughter, that he
would

would present her with the furniture. Lady Clifden was at Court, at routes, fêtes, breakfasts, &c. till she was tired of them.

At length his Lordship's birth-day came, and a fête must be given, at which she contrived to out-do the extravagance of all fashionable competitors ; and she was stamped from this hour the High Priestess of Fashion.

Now, to attain this distinguished and enviable appellation, any one must have arrived at the length of perfectly despising common forms and customs, or of considering what is proper or suitable to their fortune. They must consider themselves as superior beings, at whose shrine every thing ought to bow ; that tradesmen are honoured if they condescend to place their name in their books.

Like a certain new made Countess, who said to a milliner who was shewing
ing

ing her an expensive article, "Why, if you made me a present of it you would be a gainer; the moment I am seen with it you will have five hundred persons of quality come to buy it, who will give you any price rather than go without it." The milliner heard, but did not give her assent to the argument, and the lady went without what she wished to possess, though she would have given twice what was asked for the article when she had hardly the means of paying for it.

Miss Bellingham had now spent two months in all the hurry of fashionable dissipation; though she had not joined all the parties either at home or abroad; for Miss Moore stipulated with his Lordship when she accepted his invitation, that they should be at perfect liberty, as she could not think of Helen's being at once brought into that hurry of company

pany that must necessarily attend Lady Clifden's first *entré* into fashionable life. Notwithstanding this, it was impossible not to see and mix in the scene of riot and extravagance.

However, with Miss Moore constantly by her side, Helen was not in so much danger, as she always pointed out the impropriety of the conduct of those around her; and indeed if she had not, it was of so glaring a nature that it could not be overlooked. Helen wished for nothing more than for their removal to a small house near Richmond, which Miss Moore had taken, urging a slight indisposition of her young friends as her reason for leaving Lady Clifden.

Miss Bellingham had, by this time, acquired a sufficient stock of elegant friends, male and female, to make her an object of attention any where in the immediate vicinity of the metropolis

tropolis, as Richmond was considered to be : her great fortune had been sufficiently blazoned abroad to cause the men to look on her as an object worthy of attention. The women kept up the farce of great regard, because from her fortune she would, most likely, move in a high circle whenever she changed her state, and then it was proper to be well with her, and in the mean time they might take care she did not carry off any of their own admirers.

CHAP. XI.

WHILST Miss Bellingham had been satiated with what is mistaken for pleasure, her friend Caroline was fascinated with all the gaieties and allurements that London presented. Her youth, beauty, and innocence had not been unattended to in the circles to which she had been introduced; but though she had been flattered, yet no one had been sufficiently enamoured to offer her the proper protection that would have been desirable in her present situation. The Miss Allrights always took

took care, soon after she had been introduced to any strangers, to represent that she was Miss Bellingham's companion ; that they invited her only to take her off their sister Clifden's hands, and they generally added, they wished any one would be so charitable to themselves. This malignity of disposition was excited whenever they went abroad, for their ears were quick discoverers of sounds, and they were often assailed with hearing many enquiries of Who is that beautiful girl ?—Though they themselves had all the advantages of dress, that of person was supremely in Miss Archer's favour :—Frank's heart was hardly proof against her charms. Nothing preserved him but his observation of the volatility of her disposition. She might truly be called the "Cynthia of the minute." Helen wished to have requested her company to

Richmond, but Miss Moore advised her against any offer of this kind, until they returned to Carleton, saying she had been committed to the care of Mr. Allright, by her mother, and therefore had best, whilst in London, remain under his protection. However, had the request been made, Caroline would have declined it: for just at this juncture she had found a young man of a large independent fortune who was inclined to be particular to her, and who was looked upon to be a *marrying man*. This intelligence was communicated to Miss Moore by Lady Clifden, with a sneer, and an insinuation at her ridiculous folly in supposing he would take her without a fortune, when her own sisters were so accomplished, and would be so rich. Miss Moore lost no time in going to the city and questioning Miss Archer as to whether
 what

what she had heard had any foundation ; and she found, on enquiry, reason to suppose that there was. She then gave her the best advice, as to her conduct. It was only about a fortnight after, that Miss Moore received a letter from Mrs. Archer, to enquire if she had any acquaintance with Sir Philip Dalling's family, as she had received a request from his eldest son for her permission to pay his addresses to Caroline ? Mrs. Archer said that the match was certainly far beyond any expectation that she had for her daughter. Indeed she was fearful that, seeing her in such company, Mr. Dalling had conceived that she must be on a par in point of fortune. However, she had undeceived him, and this eclairsissement would most likely put an end to his addresses. But she was apprehensive that Caroline's affections might be engaged ; and if so, and that this gentleman was, like many

other gentlemen of the present day, without principle, why the courtship might not end so harmlessly. It was therefore Mrs. Archer's request, that Miss Moore would kindly take her under her protection, or that she would make some excuse for her hastily taking leave of Mr. Allright's family, when Mrs. Archer would send a person to town, who would accompany her daughter home.

This letter was so much in unison with the feelings of Miss Moore, that she determined to make enquiries, as to the character and family of Mr. Dal-ling; and if she found that he persevered in his intentions of making Miss Archer his wife, she thought it best to invite her to Richmond, well knowing that she was very likely to act in such a manner as might disgust him who had formed such good designs in her favour. She was very soon informed as
to

to the family of Dalling, and of his own character; which, though sometimes a little upon the eccentric, was, upon the whole, unexceptionable.— This she wrote to Mrs. Archer, offering to take care of Miss Archer, if she approved, and would write and arrange matters with the Allright family to this purpose.

This offer of Miss Moore's being directly what Mrs. Archer wished, she lost no time in carrying it into effect, and in a fortnight Caroline removed from St. Mary Axe, to join her friend Helen at Richmond. She would have rather wished her residence had been in dear London, as she now called it. She had imbibed all the taste for noisy nonsense, and expensive pleasures, as much as if she had been nursed in the lap of luxury from her birth, and now only wanted the power, as she had the inclination, to out vie any of the vota-

ries of fashion. This splendid offer of Mr. Dalling's, was beyond her highest hopes, and she looked forward to the happy day that was to crown her felicity, with much impatience. She declared to Miss Moore and Helen, that she was very glad her lover was young and elegantly formed: but this would have been no obstacle to their union, had he been as old and deformed as ever creature came from the hands of his Creator.

This conversation always displeased Miss Moore, who assured her that she was in an error, when she placed her happiness in the fleeting pleasures of dissipation. She would expostulate with Caroline frequently on this subject: and this the rather that she considered herself as fortifying, at the same time, Miss Bellingham, in sentiments which happily for her she had from her own natural good sense adopted.

“ If

“ If ever, my young friends,” she would say, “ you wish to attain to permanent happiness, it must be searched for in the bosom of a domestic circle ; not in the route, the ball, or masquerade. Who ever returned from these with any other sentiment than satiety and disgust ? Do we not every day hear our friends declare that they are tired of these scenes, though they have not resolution to abandon them, and adopt amusements more rational ? And though their health, their fortune, and sometimes reputation, suffer by their continuance in a life of which they are tired ?

Nothing can be more animating, and certainly nothing more satisfactory to a man of sense, than to contemplate the conduct of his wife, and find himself, each succeeding day, justified in his choice, by the order and propriety with which his family is conducted.

The opinion of the world stamps an additional value on her:—her dependants and domestics look up with confidence to their friend and protectress, and teach their children to lisp her praises, which, in time, their own judgment confirms. Her children look up with reverence and respect to a parent who commands the esteem of all around her, and to whose advice and counsel even the aged resort. When youth is passed, the autumn of life presents no dull inanimate scene. The good and exemplary lives of her family, make them sought after ; and in their prudent conduct she receives the reward of the hours dedicated to their improvement. A certain female author says, ‘ Propriety is to a woman, what the great Roman critic says action is to an orator ; it is the first, the second, the third requisite. A woman may be knowing, active, witty, and amusing ;

but

without propriety she cannot be amiable.' In this I perfectly agree with her : propriety certainly is the centre in which all the lines of duty and agreeableness meet. Therefore it should be the chief study of our sex. The votaries of fashion live but a day, and that a short one, before another comes and thrusts them from their throne of fancied eminence. Whilst in the plenitude of power, are they not subverting every principle of nature and religion, breaking the bonds of society, and in the act of destroying themselves? What good lesson can children imbibe from a mother, whose whole life is spent in a round of dissipation? Must not they consider themselves in a state of preparation, to enjoy in their turn all the pleasures she finds so attractive? We are taught to look up to our parents for precepts and example. Yet, what can be learnt from her who sets at

nought all domestic duties, to attend the ball and the gaming-table? Instead of looking forward with pleasure to the time when an elegant and accomplished young woman is to be introduced to the world, nothing is so unpleasant as a tall and beautiful daughter; she is the finger of time, which cannot be turned aside, and who will stamp age on her brow, who would for ever act the child but for such remembrancers.

The young ladies assented to this doctrine; though but one of them felt its full force. Their tête-a-tête was interrupted by the arrival of Lord and Lady Clifden, who would themselves have furnished a good comment on the discourse their arrival had just interrupted.

Her Ladyship looked as if she had been unable to drag herself up the steps at the door, and having done so, she
flung

flung herself into the first chair in her way.

Helen fancied that she had been suddenly seized with a fit of illness, during her ride from town, and, reaching her a bottle of lavender-water, asked her the cause of her disorder.

“ Ill, my dear creature !” said she, “ am I ill ?” jumping up in an instant to look in the glass.

Helen now found her mistake, and that it was not ill health, but ennui that had occasioned the listlessness of Lady Clifden.

She adjusted her head-dress, took out an elegant rouge-box, and added a little more of the rose, as she found the lilly had been misinterpreted. And then, turning round, she said, “ Am not I a charming physician ? Sickness vanishes, and health comes at my command. My dear Miss Bellingham, do let me try how you would look in rouge ;
you

you don't know how becoming it is ; it gives such charming fire to your eyes, you have no idea of its importance ; hath she Clifden ?”

“ Importance ? hey ! what ? I did not hear what you was talking about,” replied his Lordship.

Her Ladyship then repeated her former question..

His Lordship, after a yawn, and stretching himself, answered, that really he had not studied sufficiently to know whether rouge was a benefit or not to the fair sex ; but if his opinion was asked in Miss Bellingham's case alone, he could decide instantly, that no art could improve one who was so much indebted to nature ; this he said with a bow, then sat down, and sunk again into a kind of inattention, whilst her Ladyship squalled over a new opera-tune, declaring that the Billington and the Banti were too delightful, and that she :

she would rather be the former Lady, than Empress of all the Russias.

This declaration roused his Lordship, who wished that she could transform herself into what she thought so desirable, and then walked out upon the lawn.

Her Ladyship added, "I dare say he would love me better, if possible, if I had the powers of that enchanting woman."

Miss Moore said that she could not believe that Lord Clifden was sincere in wishing her Ladyship at all like the lady to whom she had inadvertently, no doubt, given her approbation.

"Dear me," answered Lady Clifden, "not admire Mrs. Billington! all the world are mad after her. Don't you know Miss Moore, that every body is distracted to be acquainted with her?"

"I do

“ I do know,” replied Miss Moore, “ that she is greatly attended to, and am both sorry and surprized that sound should have so far overcome sense, as to render a woman (who has been for many years so publicly notorious, as our newspapers and monthly publications inform us,) patronized and followed by those persons who hold themselves in some cases rigidly severe on the score of female character. They surely have forgot the good old proverb, ‘ Tell me your company, and I will tell you who you are.’ ”

Lady Clifden said, what had any one to do with the private character of a public performer ? If one is amused, that is all. Is she not admitted to sing before the court ?

“ I suppose she is, because I read of it in the newspapers, else I could not have believed it possible.”

“ I am

“ I am surprised still at the thoughtlessness of our female nobility, who caress women because they are on the theatres that they would blush to be seen speaking to, if brought down to the scale of private life. Do they not know, that by this countenance of vice, they, themselves, plant the first seeds of immorality in their families? Why should not the son visit and admire her who has the countenance of his mother, and who is by her declared, the most divine and enchanting woman alive?”

“ But,” replied her Ladyship, “ this is said of her in her public capacity : we are not supposed to know any more.”

“ This, then, is cheating yourselves,” rejoined Miss Moore, “ for you do know more, and all the world knows, as much as you do : suppose now Lord Clifden should, from your introduction,

tion, become attached to one of these enchanting women, could you return home from the opera alone, in your carriage contented, because you had been amused, though you knew your husband was attending your rival? Would you not say that he disgraced his family? What then does she do, who gives a sanction to vice only, because it is supported by affluence, and who would turn her eyes with disdain and scorn from the poor deluded female, who perhaps was lost before she was rightly sensible of error, and who instead of laughing at all propriety and morality, only wants a friend to assist her to regain that station from which, had she been aware of the arts of mankind, she would never have deviated."

"Oh! my dear madam, I am not going to set up for a reformer; I only know what pleases me. As for Lord Clifden's

Clifden's heart that is very safe I believe, and if it was not, I should not disturb myself who had it. These are good country ideas, they should never travel."

"Oh, dear Miss Bellingham, speaking of travelling, I came on purpose to propose a most delightful scheme to you ladies. This is to join us in a party to Brighton. All the world is going thither, and I know you must like it. My sisters have at last prevailed, and the Banker has agreed for once, to try the salt water, as he calls it. I know Miss Archer won't say, No; when I tell her Mr. Dalling has taken a house there for three months. It is large enough to contain the whole party, and then Lord and Lady Brandon, and the ridiculous Miss Dawsons are to be there, we shall have the best fun imaginable."

Helen

Helen did not know what to answer. The proposal was of too agreeable a nature for her to give an immediate negative to it. She answered, "that at present she could not determine how they should spend the remainder of the summer, but that in a few days she would inform her Ladyship if it could be possible to join her party," which she added, "would be agreeable, if practicable."

Lord Clifden returning, said "if her Ladyship chose to dine at Richmond, very well—but he had an engagement at Boodle's at seven, and must be off directly." She was engaged to two routes and a ball, and took her leave, desiring to know when Miss Bellingham had decided as to the dear Brighton party."

As soon as they were gone, Helen said "that she had heard Brighthelmstone spoke of as the most charming spot

spot in the world, and should like vastly to see it, if Miss Moore had no particular objection."

To this Miss Moore answered, "that she would be greatly disappointed, if she expected to find any thing beautiful in the place itself, for never had she seen a spot more barren of even the agreeable, than this one so enchantingly described. It lay at the bottom of a hill, and where the country was at all open it was bleak and barren, not a tree grew in its vicinity, except a small clump at a village about a mile distant; and the contemplation of the ocean alone excepted, Brighton had as little to recommend it to notice, as any spot on the habitable globe."

Helen was astonished how the same place could be viewed so differently by different persons, for every one of her fashionable friends were distracted with a wish to go thither. Nothing
was

was like dear Brighton ! Miss Moore explained to her the reason why every one was anxious to go thither. It was no other than London gone out of town, the same faces were seen, the same follies were acted on this scene, and those minds which could not, or would not reflect, were relieved by the constant hurry and bustle of society, drawn still closer and less subject to ceremonious restraints than when in the metropolis.”

Still with all this explanation, both Helen and Caroline thought that there must be something very delightful in what every body spoke of so decidedly.

Miss Moore did not say any more at this time on the subject, she hoped that impression made by the thoughtless Lady Clifden, would not last in the mind of Miss Bellingham. 'She did not wish to deprive her of those pleasures
that

that had no bad tendency, only she could have wished to abstract her from the society of so dissipated a pair as the Clifdens. Miss Bellingham, while in town, was followed most assiduously by a constant train of young men who knew that her fortune was a desirable object, and as to her mind, that was a secondary consideration; the less of sentiment she possessed, the more likely they themselves were of success. Helen had seen their motives and as yet laughed at them all. If she had a secret propensity, it was in favour of Frank Allright, whom she always observed, without seeming to do so; and of whom these observations had always tended to strengthen her good opinion of him. He had a gaiety of disposition joined to an openness of heart that pleased Helen, and she sighed to think that he perhaps thought nothing in favour of her, and therefore

fore determined to lock her secret in her own bosom, and to try to forget him. It was too soon to think of marriage for her; and she determined not to unite herself with any one until the mystery that enveloped her birth should be cleared up.

Mr. Dalling had answered Mrs. Archer, that he still persisted in his attachment to Caroline, and that fortune could place no bar to his happiness if he had her permission to receive the hand of her daughter, as he was totally independent of Sir Philip.

This offer was of too advantageous a nature to remain long a subject of hesitation. Mrs. Archer came up to town, and finding her daughter determined to become Mrs. Dalling, all matters were soon adjusted; the generosity of Mr. Dalling was evinced in his making as handsome a settlement on his wife as if she had been
highly

highly born, and had brought him an ample fortune.

None rejoiced more at her friend's good fortune than Helen; she made her many very handsome presents on the occasion. Mr. Dalling spent much of his time at Richmond, and during the time that the necessary preparations for his union were carrying on, escorted the ladies on many little pleasant tours round the neighbourhood. A letter was dispatched to Carleton to request Dr. Jackson would take a journey to Richmond, as Caroline expressed a wish that the ceremony might be performed by him, and her wishes were laws to her lover.

The good man complied with this request, and was received with great delight, both by Miss Bellingham and Miss Moore. It was determined that this union should be a profound secret till it had taken place, as it would,

Mr. Dalling said, save him from much unpleasant altercation with his own family, who could not judge of the matter which would contribute to his happiness. They only knew to whom they would wish to be related, and this was no consideration.

It was determined as soon as the ceremony was over, that the bride and bridegroom, with Mrs. Archer, were to set off directly for Brighton: and Caroline contrived that this should be the very day fixed on by the Clifdens and the Allrights. Mr. Dalling was so earnest in his request, that Miss Bellingham and Miss Moore should be of the party, that they consented to devote one month to their friend Caroline, to whose good fortune Helen considered herself as in some measure instrumental.

Helen made her excuse to Lady Clifden that she could not join her
party

party in going down to Brighton; but it was very probable that they should soon meet there, and then she would explain matters.

The old Banker's family were in so great a bustle of preparation themselves, that they had no time to make a visit so far out of town as Richmond. They contented themselves with writing a letter now and then, just to give an account of the last ball or fete they had partaken of, and to enquire after the health of their dear Miss Bellingham, the loss of whose society was deplored by all the beaus of their circle. Frank sent no remembrances to Richmond, and the rest of the circle Helen cared not for.

All was business and preparation in the great world. The birth-day was past, and remove was the word. Kensington-gardens re-echoed with How do you do? Where are you going this summer?

summer? I am going to Weymouth. Oh! I am sorry for that, we are going to Brighton. When do you leave town? It is grown a desert of dust and dullness. Each person was planning some scheme that should relieve them from the burthen of their own thoughts, from which they could not be sure of being divested, did they bend their course towards home, where they might live happy and tranquil at one third the expence it cost to cram themselves into a dirty ill furnished house at a watering-place, where there is no respect to persons farther than as you will suffer yourself to be imposed upon. My Lady Duchess and a rich Contractor's wife are not here even upon a par; for the weight of purse often preponderates on the side of the latter, and respect attends the richest. Change but the scene, let her Grace appear where she should be, at the ancient seat of
her

her ancestors amongst her own tenantry, whose families have for ages been rooted like the oaks to the soil, and here she is enthroned high above the lady of mere money, the atchievements of whose ancestors, if they could be traced, would create no sentiment but scorn for their shameful tricks and peculations. Therefore, the busy throng is the place for such people, whilst the nobility should remain on their estates, cultivating the soil and the affections of their people, and there becoming the great nerve and sinew of the state in times of convulsion or commotion; and in that of peace, the pride and boast of the nation, supported and upheld by their patriotism.

On the morning appointed for the general remove, Dr. Jackson joined the hands of Caroline Archer and Mr. Dalling, attended by Helen and Miss
D 3 Moore,

Moore, and after a hurried breakfast, he put them into their respective carriages with his benediction, and a prayer that they might be sensible of as much felicity as is permitted to us in this changeful world; and then quietly got into a chaise on his return to Carleton.

The wedding had been conducted with as much privacy as was possible. Never were there a happier party. Helen enjoyed the idea of meeting the city party, either on the road or as soon as they reached Brighton. She had no regret at leaving London, except that she could not procure instruction so well in the country, for she had dedicated much of her time to improvement, and had made great proficiency in some elegant accomplishments.

Nothing material happened, until they came within a few miles of their journey's

journey's end ; when, about half a mile before them, they observed a carriage standing in the middle of the road, but could not distinguish, at that distance, to whom it might belong. On coming nearer, the well-known head of Mr. Allright caught their eye. He was half out of the window, scolding the servants. His carriage had lost a wheel. Helen and Miss Moore were considerably before the carriage, which contained the bride and bridegroom. They stopped, when Mr. Allright exclaimed, " Aye, aye, ladies, this is attending to your advice."

Miss Allright and her sister now accosted them, saying, that " a horrid rude fellow had drove against them on purpose, and pulled of the wheel, and then sat up a violent laugh, and drove on : " but they thought they should know him again.

Miss Sophia said, "So you have sent Miss Archer home, I see."

"Don't talk of Miss Archer," replied the old man, "how are you to get to Brighton, pray?"

Miss Moore offered them seats in their coach, when the carriage might be repaired, and come after them.

This the Banker most thankfully accepted. They took their seats, though a little crowded, and proceeded on their journey. They had not drove far, before they were overtaken by Mr. Dalling's carriage, when Helen cried, "There is the bride!" — "Bride!" both the ladies exclaimed, "who is married?"

Miss Moore then informed them that she had that morning had the satisfaction of seeing Dr. Jackson join the hands of Miss Archer and Mr. Dalling, and that they were now going of their party to Brighton.

"I'm

“I’m hearty glad to hear it,” said Mr. Allright. I hope she will make him a good wife, and I’ll have a kiss of the bride, as soon as we arrive, with Dalling’s permission.”

The Misses were not so hearty glad of it, for they had made sure of Dalling, at least for an attendant, whilst at Brighton; and now, here was a young and beautiful woman, who would have, not only his, but the attention of all the male sex.

“Well!” Miss Allright said, “I am glad of Caroline’s good fortune, but I had no idea that Mr. Dalling was in earnest, when he talked of her in such high strains of praise. It was very odd that such a still quiet man as he was, should like such a lively rattling girl as Miss Archer.”

Sophia added, that “She would shew him dash enough, or she was mistaken. He talked of going down to Bentley

Abbey, whenever he married, and there to fix for life : but I am mistaken if our friend Caroline fixes to reside wholly at the Abbey."

Mr. Allright replied, " No, that she would not, if she once knew this to be the wish and intention of her husband, for women always acted by contraries."

Miss Bellingham said, that " he was very severe on the ladies. She hoped, for the honour of the sex, that his censure was undeserved, and she believed that Caroline would act with becoming propriety in this her married state, or she must be very ungrateful to him who had placed his future happiness in her keeping."

The Banker would not recede from his opinion, but nodded his head with a significant Well, well ! we shall see.

About six in the evening the whole
party

party arrived at Mr. Dalling's house, on the Stein, where the bride and bridegroom were ready to receive them.

The Miss Allrights excused themselves from alighting, as they were not dressed for a bridal visit; but their father would just go in and shake hands with Dalling, and return directly. He did so, and they drove off to the house prepared for them by their father's agent.

The ladies were not in a humour to be pleased, and after quitting the door of a handsome house in a fashionable quarter, where Miss Archer was the mistress, to alight at a house in North-street, such a one as they would have been ashamed to stop their carriage at in London, unless occupied by their milliner or mantua-maker, put them out of all patience.

Miss Allright and her sister declared that they would stay with their sister

Clifden whilst they remained at Brighton, if she could give them a mouse-hole, rather than be seen coming out of so filthy a street as their father had crammed them into. Mr. Allright said he was well pleased with the situation, and if they were not pleased, why they might decamp as soon as they liked. He did not doubt but a mistress might be got to preside over his family even in North-street. A servant was dispatched to know if her Ladyship was arrived. Word was returned that the Countess was too fatigued to see even her sisters that evening, but they might come to breakfast next morning. The old Citizen observed, that Louisa had learnt fine lady airs already, and that he should not go to her house so invited.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

BRIGHTON was full of all the beauty and fashion of the season, and Miss Allrights were acquainted with the names of all the men of ton the first morning after their arrival, as Miss Allright's maid had been dispatched to the Library immediately after breakfast, and returned laden with news. She informed them that there was a prodigious stock of Nay Bobs from India just arrived. The prudent Abigail said, that she dared to say they would be very dear, and that most likely Mr. Allright would like to buy some as they must be good, and the gentry would no doubt
buy

buy them up directly ; for she remembered, one season before, a great flock of wheat-ears were bought up in a quarter of an hour ; and as the India birds came so far they must be a greater rarity.

Both the ladies laughed at the girl's mistake, and said they would buy some themselves if they could be easily caught, and advised the girl to hasten to her master with the information, or he might be too late. She left them directly, and communicated her intelligence with much importance to the old Banker, who, when he had heard her story out, replied,

“ I wish they were safe in India again. I know no good they do here, only to display wealth, of which they know not the value, and which they squander capriciously. They would not, perhaps, give a guinea to save your life, and would at the same time
pay

pay a hundred for any trinket offered by a Lord or Lady. They are good for nothing but to render our guineas of hardly half their original value.

The girl walked away confounded when she perceived her Indian birds were birds of prey and not of the harmless kind she had supposed.

The intelligence, however, that there were such valuable creatures as Nabobs at Brighton had its due weight with the ladies, and they dressed in haste to display on the Stein faces whose attraction they believed could not fail of having due weight, especially as they were known to possess other weighty attractions in St. Mary Axe banking-house.

All the morning was spent in meeting and congratulating friends and acquaintances. How do you do? When did you arrive? Where do you live? and where do you dispose of yourselves
for

for the evening? With the proper answers to these questions, and staring and being stared at, made up the sum of the first morning's lounge.

They had not met either Lord or Lady Clifden, nor had Mr. or Mrs. Dalling been seen on the Stein. Conjecture was at work to consider why they did not appear, when a card, highly decorated, arrived with an invitation from Louisa to her father and sisters to dine with her Lord and herself to meet the Dallings, Miss Bellingham, and Miss Moore, and a larger party in the evening, who were to meet there and go to the rooms. The invitation was accepted without the concurrence of the old Banker, who was taking a solitary walk toward Rottendean, thinking that this was the exact time and place to tender his regards to Miss Moore, lest

lest some of the thoughtless fellows of the place might get hold of Miss Bellingham and her fortune, and frustrate his plans.

Just in the midst of his profound thinking on this subject, Miss Bellingham's carriage overtook him and Miss Moore in it alone. She stopped as soon as she saw Mr. Allright, to enquire for the ladies, and to tell him that she had left Miss Bellingham with Mr. Dalling, in order to arrange their dress for their appearance at Lady Clifden's at dinner that day, she having received an invitation early in the morning.

This account that a party had been made by Louisa without even himself or her sisters being asked, served to render him the more determined in his intentions towards Miss Moore, and as he thought, no time could be better than the present one; he declared himself

himself a little fatigued, and asked her for charity to admit him into the carriage: Miss Moore readily complied with his request, though she was alone; not being of that description of ladies who study what the world will say, and often that only. To the tattle of the world she was indifferent, conscious that her intentions and actions were governed by the strictest propriety; besides, they had both past that time of life when envy and ill-nature are on the watch for an opportunity to debase those they cannot imitate.

Mr. Allright knowing that his time was but short, made the most of it. He proved no bad orator; for at parting, Miss Moore expressed no reluctance to take into consideration the proposal he had made to her, and at a future time to renew the subject.

As they passed the Stein on their return, Miss Bellingham stopped the carriage,

carriage, and getting in, ended the interesting conversation, but not before every thing seemed to be getting into a proper train.

They set Mr. Allright down at his own door.

Miss Bellingham related what had passed in the course of her walk ; but Miss Moore was not quite so communicative as her young friend, and soon retired, as, she said, to arrange her wardrobe and dress for dinner.

However, she wished to be alone, to think at leisure of the proposal she had just had made to her, which, though she was a little surprised at it, yet deserved her serious consideration. What Lady Levet had left her, together with a small trifle of fortune she herself possessed, was certainly sufficient, whilst she resided with Miss Bellingham—nay, more than she had use for ; but then this young lady
might,

might, and certainly would marry, and then any future residence in her family might be unpleasant.

With Mr. Allright she ensured herself an elegant independence, and could not at all injure any of his family, as he had sufficient to set them out in the world.

It was hardly to be doubted but two shewy girls would soon go off when they had good fortunes in addition to their good connections. The only bar to her accepting this offer was, that she considered herself engaged to remain with Miss Bellingham until she should be of age, and fit to take the management of her own affairs.

This demur she dismissed, with a hope that Helen might be induced to remove with her, and put herself under the Banker's protection till this period arrived. After considering and re-considering the matter, she determined

mined to give no decided answer for the present, but to keep the negotiation open for a little longer.

The dinner party met at Lord Clifden's, and were joined by Mr. Allright and his family, as he found on his return home that a proper invitation had been sent, and that Miss Moore was to be there. This intimation would have determined him to go, even unasked. As he had opened the negotiation without a shadow of repulse, he was inclined to hope it might be soon brought to a conclusion.

The conversation turned upon the company they had met in their different walks and rides in the morning. Lady Clifden declared the place quite empty of fashion. She told her sisters she had been pestered with nothing but congratulations from their city friends when she hoped to have met Lady Laurel, the Duchess of Warrington,

Warrington, and a thousand more fashionables.

Mr. Allright was not pleased with the city's being held out in such a contemptible light before his Lady elect, and replied to his daughter, that perhaps her city friends might be found the most steady ones after a little experience. These flaunting flirts of fashion might do to flash away with upon the Stein ; but as they had now left off, as he had learnt, wearing pockets, so they had long left off the use of purses, either to pay their debts or assist their friends.

Lady Clifden retorted, that her father was never easy without making money the subject of conversation. She did not see, for her part, that the people who wore pockets, and those tolerably large ones, were a' whit the readier to unloose their purse-strings. This was understood by all the company,

pany, as well as by the Banker himself, who continued eating his soup very quietly.

The Miss Allrights were a little disturbed at the elegant appearance of Mrs. Dalling, who had come to dinner in an entire new and well appointed carriage, and was dressed in the first style of fashion.

Not so did her appearance affect Miss Bellingham, whose spirits were this day elevated to their highest pitch in the contemplation of the happiness of her friend Caroline. She considered that her own good fortune had been the means of that of her friend's also ; and she looked forward with gratitude to the great disposer of events to a long series of happy days in her society.

Lord and Lady Clifden treated their friends with such easy nonchalance,
that

that it was difficult to say if they paid them any attention.

After dinner, his Lordship threw himself on a sofa, and amused himself with the play of a couple of spaniels, until a footman came to know if there was any order for the Groom. This roused him sufficiently to ask Mr. Dalling if he wou'd, in the evening, take a drive with him over the Downs toward Lewes.

Mr. Dalling excused himself, saying, he could not think of leaving the society of the Ladies for one of his own sex.

Lady Clifden thought that his Lordship had better not leave them the first evening to parade the Stein unattended.

His Lordship could not lose his drive, so consigned them to the care of Mr. Dalling and Mr. Allright, and said he should be back time enough to attend

attend them to the rooms. Upon this declaration, Sophia Allright offered herself for a companion to his Lordship, and as he could not get any more agreeable company, he accepted her's.

Poor Miss Allright was this day destined to mortification; for the moment the party set foot on the Stein, the men gathered round them, and all declared, loud enough to be heard, that Mrs. Dalling was an angel.

Before they reached the library, they were literally surrounded, and obliged to force, as it were, their way through. Dalling and his bride were highly flattered with this mark of admiration, though, it must be allowed, Caroline enjoyed the triumph of beauty in the highest degree. However Miss Allright was vexed, she was obliged to be silent, and endeavour to secure to herself all the attention unoccupied by the

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bride, who, she assured every one, who enquired about her, was such, and only married two days.

This, she thought, would bring the gentlemen to pay attention to her and her sister; since Mrs. Dalling was disposed of. However, she did not find this succeed, for they still declared she was supremely beautiful. Even Helen was surprized at this exaggerated praise; though she allowed that dress had greatly set off a pretty face and a fine person.

After having sauntered up and down this fashionable lounge, till they had seen Lord Clifden and Miss Allright return, they went home to tea, and to prepare for making their entrée at the rooms.

Mr. and Mrs. Dalling excused themselves from being of this party, and returned home, not a little delighted with their reception.

It was the first time the ears of Caroline had been assailed with such a volley of encomiums and exaggerated praise. It had its due weight upon her mind, and she longed to appear again in the circle in which she had received such angelic sounds.

Dalling took every compliment to his wife, as a sanction of his superior taste, and, if possible, it gave her, even in his eyes, additional lustre.

As soon as they were gone, Lady Clifden exclaimed, "there goes a country Miss entirely spoiled; she will believe herself really the great beauty those silly boys termed her, and Dalling will hardly get her down to Bently Abbey, instead of fixing her there for life."

This roused his Lordship, who exclaimed, "Louisa, I'll bet you fifty, she out does you at a fête before the

end of the next winter, splendid as your last one was said to be."

"Who furnished the cash?" asked the Banker, "or are the poor devils of tradesmen wasting their time and paper, sheet after sheet, in compliments to your Housekeeper, to know when it will be most convenient to inclose the bill to her care?"

Her Ladyship promised to tell him the truth, provided he would furnish her with the means to win his Lordship's last bet.

This he positively refused, and most heartily hoped no fool of a tradesman would put it in her power to ruin both him and herself, by repeating such follies. "Your visitors laugh at you, and even your servants laugh at you. The tradesmen do the same; till the laugh is turned against themselves by their being gazetted. They trust you from a principle

ciple of avarice. They expect, by waiting long for their money, that you will forget the articles that they furnished you with ; trusting to this, they not only double the quantity of articles, but, perhaps, treble the price upon each. If one in three, indeed, pays, they are no looser ; but if nobody pays, which is becoming the fashion, why the man is a bankrupt. Sometimes he is enabled to begin business again, and then makes sure to get your custom, having suffered severely on your account before. No ! no ! you know better than this, and have, before he applied, given your custom elsewhere ; and the poor man and his family starve, because families who pay their bills regularly, will not deal with him, as he has a name for making enormous charges : though you never pay, you clatter enough about the extravagance of bills, to

make your friends believe you sometimes pay them ; so he sinks and other fools rise to act over the same farce, till you sink yourself, and the curtain drops."

" Well," exclaimed Sophia, " papa has quite a notion of stage effect ; he had better write a play."

" I hope," rejoined he, " I have not described a scene that will be acted in my family ; but I fear it ;" and then he walked into the other room ; when he was declared, by most of the company, to be good for nothing but to create dulness.

Miss Moore and Miss Bellingham, who had gone home with Mrs. Dalling, to adjust their dress, in order to accompany the party, soon returned. They all set off for the rooms, where a few people were yet assembled. They went rather early that they might sit opposite the door, and so see who of
their

their friends were at Brighton, that they had not met in the morning on the Stein.

They had not sat long, when two ladies and two gentlemen entered the room, and Helen heard some one exclaim, "The divine Miss Bellingham!" A lady ran up and seized her by the hand.

This was no other than Mrs. Lavington, her country neighbour, who appeared overjoyed to find the party, of all others in the world, she most wished to meet.

She soon left Helen to embrace Lady Clifden, and to reproach her for quitting town without giving her notice of her rout, with which she declared she should have been perfectly unacquainted, had it not been for a discarded footman she had met on the step of her house in Grosvenor Street.

After having talked herself nearly

out of breath, to the no small amusement of the several standers by, she seated herself between Lady Clifden and Miss Bellingham, whom she again assured, she was overjoyed to meet. She had something of consequence for her private ear, and would call in the morning for that purpose.

Miss Moore, Miss Allright, and her father, who had chosen to saunter up and down the room, now came up, and had their share of compliments.

At length, Mrs. Lavington recollected that she had not come to the rooms alone, and exclaiming, "How remiss!" She introduced Mrs. Elderton and her two sons, very particular friends of hers, with whom she had come to Brighton, in quest of her other dear friends, and to whom she begged to introduce them. Mrs. Elderton was a widow, like herself, not so much attached to that state as to refuse a
good

good offer if it came in her way. Mrs. Elderton was certainly many years older than Mrs. Lavington, as two overgrown sons declared by their appearance; yet she seemed to keep pace with the youngest in company as to her style and mode of dress. She soon pinned herself to the sleeve of Miss Marian Allright, hoped of all things that they should be better acquainted, and that she would introduce James, her youngest and her darling son to the heiress, meaning Miss Bellingham. She also enquired particularly if she thought that she was engaged. Marian said, that she did not know of any particular engagement of a matrimonial nature; if there was any, it was a secret to her. This declaration raised both the spirits of Mrs. Elderton and those of her son, to whom she contrived to whisper the joyful intelligence. More than once Lady Clifden

applied to her father to rid her of these city bores, or she should be shunned by all her fashionable friends. Lord Clifden had already separated himself from her, and had joined Lady Betty and Lord Charles Wynne.

The old Banker was so offended at the affront put upon the city by his daughter, that he turned on his heel and muttered something of wishing his Lordship had separated himself from his family sooner; as it might not have been the worse for them. He went and seated himself by Miss Moore and Mrs. Lavington, and left his daughter to extricate herself from the citizens how she could. She was not long in doing this, by formally wishing them a good evening. Taking her sister by one arm, and Miss Bellingham by the other, she tripped across the room and introduced Helen to Lady Betty and Lord Charles Wynne, who

who received her with that ease and affability so constantly attendant upon high birth, when accompanied by good sense. The latter of these qualities Lady Betty Wynne was said to possess in a great degree. She often saw and laughed at the foibles of her friends; but she did this without making them the subject of her ridicule, as is too often the case with fashionable friends. Lord Charles, her son, did not want for a tolerable portion of his mother's superiority of mind; but this was not visible to any common observer; for any good qualities he possessed were totally absorbed in the imitation of fashionable manners, and even fashionable vices. So destructive is bad example to the young mind, that this young man had taken more pains to render himself unamiable than it would have taken him to be respected and revered by those who wished him to be

the exact reverse of what he seemed, without feeling, without sentiment, and without principle. Such were the Peer and his mother introduced to Helen. Lady Clifden quite adored Lord Charles, to speak in her own language, which meant no more than that his sentiments and manners were just to her taste.

His Lordship surveyed Miss Bellingham with the eye of a critic, and at length pronounced, in an audible whisper to his mother, that she was a neat little thing, and a little fashion would soon make her followed. Helen had learnt so much of the mode of the times, that she appeared deaf to this remark, though the blush on her cheek still betrayed the truth.

Lady Betty asked Helen if she designed to make any stay at Brighton, to which she replied, that she believed,
in

in a few weeks Miss Moore intended returning to Carleton.

“ Good Heavens ! ” exclaimed Lord, Charles, “ are you not out of leading-strings yet ? What is governess still attendant ? Every body here follows their own inclinations ! and if any one opposes your doing so, only let me know, and I shall deliver you from the dragon.”

At this moment a gentleman came up to Lord Charles and relieved Miss Bellingham from making a reply. This gentleman, whose name was Gower, possessed great sensibility of countenance, which had been called forth as he came across the Stein, by having met a poor woman surrounded by four young children, and accompanied by a fifth, who was about sixteen, who had just stepped from a boat to inform his mother that his father had been seized and forcibly taken out of his boat by a party from a man of war,
and

and that he was left to bring the dreadful tidings home. The poor woman had fainted on the beach, had been recovered by the humanity of those about her, and was now proceeding towards her wretched home penniless, with five fatherless children; for she persuaded herself that her husband would never more return.

Mr. Gower told this story to the party; as soon as he ceased speaking, Lord Charles Wynne burst into a loud fit of laughter, saying, “’pon my soul, Gower, this is a lucky hit for you who are always on the hunt for adventure: Was the lady beautiful, and the babes interesting? Take my advice, hire a snug box on the Downs, and put them all into it, and I will get Miss Dashwood to celebrate you in some of her next poetical effusions.

A very different effect this plain and simple tale had on the nerves of Helen,
 whose

whose tears plainly shewed the part she took in its relation.

Both Lady Betty and Lady Clifden said it was a dreadful circumstance for the poor creature, but it did not seem to make any farther impression. Lady Clifden rallied Lord Charles on his insensibility to Mr. Gower's tale as she called it. When the reporter saw it not likely to make a more favourable impression, he walked from the party with a look of contempt, at their insensibility. Helen was hurt at seeing this, as her own heart told her that she was undeserving of being included in such a sentiment. Miss Moore and Mrs. Lavington coming up, she complained of a head-ach, and, wishing her friends a good night, they returned home. During her ride thither, Helen acquainted Miss Moore of the distressing story she had heard related with so much feeling by Mr. Gower, and to
the

the relation of which his auditors had listened with such apathy, and replied to so unfeelingly.

Miss Moore heard and commiserated the tale, and determined the next morning to send and make enquiries after the poor widowed woman and her family.

With hopes of being of use to this family, if deserving, Helen retired to rest, resolving the first dawn of the day should be dedicated to this purpose.

Not so were the minds of those employed, whom she left behind her at the rooms. Her back was no sooner turned than Lady Clifden and Lord Charles burst into a fit of laughter; her Ladyship exclaiming, "poor childish thing—did you see her whimpering at Gower's fudge of a story?"—"Yes," answered his Lordship, "I dare say he invented it to see what we would

would say. He often prosed in this way, and then reads one a lesson on Sensibility; but I never could find that there was any foundation for any of his nonsense."

"Did you ever take the trouble seriously to find out the truth by making the necessary enquiries?" asked his mother.

"No, indeed, I did not run about in quest of misfortunes like the knight of the woeful countenance of old: but if all the accidents had happened he is talking of continually, the newspapers would have been full of them. I dare say Gower has told his tale all over the rooms by this time. I will go and see whom he has sent home weeping like the fair Niobe, who parted from us because his Majesty had found a good seaman for his service; and away he ran to rattle others out of the best feelings of humanity, if he should find
any

any one inclined to think seriously of this poor woman's situation when they retired to their pillows. However, he did not find that he had any good intentions to subvert; for most of Mr. Gower's friends had given up the weakness of being moved by misfortune in any shape. Pleasure was the Goddess they pursued; and wherever she reared her gay standard they were found. Misfortune and misery were obsolete words, and excluded from their vocabulary.

Mr. Gower himself had left the rooms, or Lord Charles intended to rally him; as no one else seemed inclined to talk upon any subject but raffles, races, and parties of pleasure.

Mrs. Elderton, on Lady Clifden's so abruptly wishing her a good evening, had joined Mrs. Lavington. She declared, that when people grew great, it always made them vast impertinent.

Indeed,

Indeed, she did not know any lady had any occasion to give herself such airs ; but she would see bye and bye, if she had got riches sufficient to uphold her title ; for she had a bond of Lord Clifden's long since due, and as they did not know her, why she need not be delicate any longer, and should write her people in town to demand payment. This she had delayed on Mrs. Lavington's representation what a charming woman her Ladyship was, and what delightful parties they would have together at Brighton ; and as this might introduce her two booby sons into life, she was willing to wait the result of this journey before she insisted on payment, as she did not doubt Mr. Allright's interference if it became necessary to apply for it.

Mrs. Lavington had learnt from Miss Moore that Mrs. Dalling was also at Brighton. The news of her marriage

marriage had appeared in the papers the day she left town, which happened to be the day after Lord Clifden left it. As soon in the morning as it was proper, a servant was dispatched to Mr. Dalling's, with compliments and all proper congratulations. This was followed at noon by a visit from the widow herself, who assured Mrs. Dalling, that she predicted her good fortune the moment she saw her at the Lodge. She said, that she doubted not but her lovely heiress was, e'er this, on the high road towards matrimony, as she had heard innumerable suitors spoke of. Mrs. Dalling said, that her friend was not in haste to change her present state. Indeed, she had determined to remain single until she mystery was cleared up that enveloped her birth.

“Apropos,” said Mrs. Lavington, “I have heard that there is a Lady about

about to claim Miss Bellingham for her daughter, and I wanted to ask you if it is true.

Mrs. Dalling was quite surprised at this, and assured her that no such intelligence had reached the ears of her friend. But this being joyful news, she wished to be the first to communicate it, and would send directly to speak to Miss Moore if she was not gone out. Mrs. Lavington did not know that Helen was Mrs. Dalling's visitor until this declaration; for though she had whispered the evening before that she had something for her private ear, and that she would call on her in the morning, Mrs. Lavington had forgot to ask where she resided. The widow said, that she could give no regular information on this subject, having only heard it vaguely spoken of at a milliner's by some ladies who were trying on some caps before she
left

left town. Indeed she did not even know these ladies names, only they said it was a wonder Lady Levet did not tell the young lady her mother was living, and also, they said, very rich.

However, Mrs. Lavington begged Mrs. Dalling still to keep this matter a secret, as it was totally out of her power to develope it any farther. If there was any truth in it, why it would soon come forth, as a lady suspecting she had any clue to recover a lost child, would be too anxious to be kept long in suspence. The conversation now turned upon the company and the amusements of the place, which Mrs. Lavington declared to be quite dull, whilst to Mrs. Dalling it appeared a most gay and brilliant scene. The world was unfolding itself to her in its brightest colours ; no cloud overshadowed the gay prospect, whilst to her companion the scene was contracting every day :

day: fresh beauties, and if not beauties, fresh faces, thrust her's quite out of date, and mortifications succeeded each other so rapidly, that she no sooner got over one, than she was assailed by another, without courage to quit a scene of folly and dissipation, and sit down in a quiet and respectable circle, in which, though she might not attract admiration, she might command respect. Mrs. Lavington begged leave to introduce her friend, Mrs. Elderton, with her two sons, Henry and James, who, she declared, were the most agreeable young men she knew; and, as a secret, she informed Mrs. Dalling that James had come down purposely to offer his hand to Miss Bellingham. As he was very engaging, she had no doubt of his success, provided Miss B. was not pre-engaged, which she could hardly think it possible not to be the case.

Miss

Miss Moore and her young friend now joined the party. Helen had a letter in her hand just received from Dr. Jackson, giving them an account of his safe arrival at Carleton, and of his having found there a very extraordinary letter, addressed to him, which he had inclosed to Miss Moore for her opinion before he returned an answer. Seeing Mrs. Lavington, she only said, "Caroline, I have got a letter from our good friend, the doctor, who desires his remembrances to the fair Bride and Mr. Dalling." She then put it in her pocket, and waited impatiently the end of Mrs. Lavington's visit. However, her patience was to be tried this morning, for the Clifdens, with Lady Betty and Lord Charles Wynne, came in, and spent more than an hour in idle chit chat, whilst Helen's mind was on the rack of doubt and conjecture; nay, Lord Charles would not leave the place
until

until he had secured the hand of Helen for the next night's dress ball. Having obtained the first request he had ever made to Miss Bellingham, he took his leave, condescending to escort his mother into the next street. This he did, trusting that they might meet no one in their walk who knew him; for if he did, he reckoned that he should be teized to death for twaddling about with mamma.

As soon as they found themselves alone, Miss Bellingham drew forth the good doctor's letter, and read as follows:

“ Dear Madam,

“ As I only arrived at home last night, I should have waited for a line from Miss Bellingham, which her goodness had promised we should receive as soon as she saw how she liked Brighton, had not the inclosed made it necessary that

I should consult you before I made any reply.

“ SIR,

“ I am deputed by a lady of rank and considerable fortune, to ask you a few plain questions, the answers to which are of considerable moment to her future peace, and may, perhaps, tend to throw some light on the mystery concerning the birth of the young lady to whom Lady Levet has left her fortune. What is the exact age of the young lady? Where was she born? What was the name and occupation of her nurse? did this nurse receive her from her mother, or was she brought to her at some time after her birth? A candid answer to these questions will bring on an eclarcissement, that may terminate happily for all the parties concerned. This letter is not addressed by idle curiosity, but instigated by extreme

treme maternal anxiety. A speedy answer will enhance the obligation of,

“ Reverend Sir,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ L. X. V. Y.”

Address to the Bar of the Chapter Coffee-house, St. Paul's Church-yard, London.

“ You, madam, can direct me best as to the answers to these several questions, or whether they ought to be answered at all. You will, no doubt, mention this application to the young lady herself. I am truly sorry to agitate her with this information, without having it at all in my power to afford a clue whereby she can discover the writer of the letter, or from whom the enquiry originates; but I could not bring my mind to give a cold and decided negative to questions put with such earnestness, and which, as alleged, so mate-

rially concerned the happiness of the dear young lady, as well as a female of rank, who may, and who, I heartily wish, may be nearly related to her. I believe she is, and ever will continue (with the blessing of Divine Providence) an honor to any family, however elevated. Pray, my dear madam, offer to Miss Bellingham, and accept yourself, the good wishes of Mrs. Jackson and myself for a happy termination of the present negociation. I must trouble you also with my respects, &c. to the fair bride and her partner.

“ I remain your obedient and

“ Devoted Servant,

“ ROBT. JACKSON.”

Parsonage-house, Carleton,

August 16th.

Miss Bellingham appeared in considerable agitation, as she really was, whilst reading the foregoing letter ; and
when

when she had concluded, waited to hear what her friends thought on the subject.

Mrs. Dalling broke forth into violent strains of exultation, as she was certain her friend would find in this female of rank her mother, and that all would be set to rights before the period assigned by her friend, Lady Levet. She advised immediately to break the seals of the important packet, and so resolve both her own and the lady's doubts.

This advice accorded well with the inclination and wishes of Helen, but she foresaw many obstacles to this mode of conduct.

Miss Moore said that she was greatly at a loss how to act on the present occasion, in order to satisfy and quiet the mind of Miss Bellingham, and also that of the person, who applied on the part of some family, no doubt, who had been so unfortunate as to lose a

daughter in her childhood. Indeed, to some of the questions no answer could be given, from her having never herself been informed on the subject; and she had given a solemn promise to her deceased friend not to speak to any person, particularly to strangers, on the subject of Miss Bellingham, until all mystery should be cleared up.

This promise of not speaking to strangers on the subject, convinced Helen that there were persons living who were concerned in her fate, and who, it was possible, might come to claim her. She was by this confirmed in the belief that the lady of rank was most likely a dear parent as anxious as herself, and she would willingly have relinquished, at this moment, all the great fortune bequeathed to her by Lady Eleanor, to have had her true origin made known.

Miss Moore said all in her power,
situated

situated as she was, to calm the mind of her young friend, assuring her, that she did not herself believe that the present application would terminate in any certainty, or that it would be found she had any connexion with the enquirers.

Helen, who was in tears, replied, that, “ If Miss Moore could assure her that this lady was not any connection of her’s, she would think no more about it, but wait the appointed time set by Lady Levet.”

Though it grieved her much, yet Miss Moore could not give this assurance, as she said she was not in possession of any certain information.

“ Then,” replied Helen, “ *the stranger* has made enquiries after me, and she is my mother, or can perhaps direct me to her, and Providence will put me out of suspense. I will write to Dr. Jackson, and beg that I may be

permitted to request an interview with the person who wrote to him. I can reveal nothing ; and if I act wrong, no one can be blamed but myself."

Miss Moore warned her against precipitation, lest in searching for a future, she should lose a present good. At length it was resolved to wait till Mr. Dalling came home, and take his advice on the subject.

On his return he was assailed by all parties. After hearing the different arguments on both sides of the question, he was rather at a loss to deliver his opinion without giving some offence. He weighed well all that Miss Moore spoke on the subject ; for, besides her being a very sensible and judicious woman, he believed that she might have been entrusted by Lady Levett with her secret, under severe restrictions. He could not divest his mind, like many others, of a belief
that

that Helen stood in a very near relation to the right honourable spinster ; yet, if this should not be the case, it was very cruel to prevent Miss Bellingham from finding her real parents, who might have caught some clue to guide them to their child. He was greatly interested in the fate of Miss Bellingham ; as she was herself truly amiable, and also was the bosom friend of her with whom he had made a deposit of all his future happiness. Mrs. Dalling was for immediately going to London, and finding out the person who wrote to Dr. Jackson, as she was persuaded that this would develop the whole to all their satisfaction. At length Mr. Dalling advised that it would be best for the Doctor to answer as to the age, and also to give a description of the young lady, and a direction to the place where she was at school, and leave the mistress of this to describe from whom they received her.

This was violating no promise, but yet a step by which some information might be gained.

Mr. Dalling's advice was thankfully taken, as it allowed of farther communication with the parties, if they wished it ; and if they heard no more, why it was a natural conclusion that they were satisfied their search had been wrong directed.

Miss Moore wrote the Doctor by that day's post, what she and all the parties concerned had determined ; at the same time leaving it to his own discretion to add whatever he pleased to say in answer to the letter, which she returned without any farther comment.

This glimpse of hope had raised a considerable disturbance in the mind of Helen ; she even envied her friend Caroline, who was sitting in the next room with an affectionate mother and husband beside her, whilst she herself
was

was tortured with the most cruel suspense, without any proof either for or against her having any parent in existence. Perhaps at that moment her own parents might be as anxiously searching for her as she would be to fly to them, did she but know where to find them. And it might be possible for fate to disappoint her, and that they might no longer be in existence before she should be at liberty to claim them. This she would have done at every risk, had she been sure of their being related to her.

CHAP. XIII.

NOTWITHSTANDING the great anxiety produced by Dr. Jackson's letter, and the one he enclosed for their opinion, Miss Bellingham was hurried into all the dissipation of the place. She was surrounded by admirers, amongst whom was Mr. Gower, the gentleman who had made a very favourable impression the first time she saw him, by the interest he took in the family of the poor fisherman.

Miss Bellingham had, early the next morning, sent for the poor woman, from whose mouth she had heard a piteous tale,

tales, confirming that which Mr. Gower had so pathetically related. Waters, the fisherman, bore an excellent character, both amongst his superiors and his equals, and every one felt for his deserted family. Helen gave the poor woman some present relief, and promised to give her a weekly allowance as long as her husband should be away, if she took care of her children, and conducted herself properly. For which she replied, "Ah! madam, how could you think it possible that I should neglect my poor William's children when he is away? He has toiled hard many a year for me and them, and God will now, I hope, assist me to do my duty. It will be cruel, indeed, if they should take my son; but I hope not, and Providence may restore my poor husband one day to us all." Both Miss Moore and her young friend heartily joined in this wish; and Sarah Waters departed from

from Mr. Dalling's loaded with presents, and wishing every blessing ten fold on the benevolent family.

Mr. Gower had not been merely a retailer of misery, like those who make a parade of exciting that charity from others which they have not the heart to extend themselves. He had taken down the direction the evening before, and had walked to the fisherman's cottage; during the time Sarah Waters had been absent at Mr. Dalling's. Finding the windows shut, and the house door locked, he had wandered along the beach, to see if he could meet any of the children. He did not see any body who could give him any intelligence; but just as he came within sight of the cottage, on his return, the poor widowed owner presented herself, and he entered with her; when she related the account of the goodness of the family, and described Helen so well, that Mr. Gower.

Gower (who had witnessed, the evening before, the interest she took in his story) recognized her who had already made an impression on his mind. He knew not her name or her story; but, on quitting the cottage, he hastened to the library, to try and find some one acquainted with Mr. Dalling's family, as he knew Miss Bellingham resided with them.

He was in great good luck; for, on the step of the shop, Mrs. Lavington presented herself, and, putting forth her fair hand, hailed Mr. Gower with a hundred enquiries at once: Where did he come from? When did he arrive? Was he married? and, last of all, Would he dine with her, and meet the sweetest and the richest girl in the place?

He answered all these several questions regularly, and agreed to make one at the dinner party, provided the sweet girl, concerning whom he was
then

then in quest of information, and the one she described, were one and the same person; and this was possible, as he saw them talking together the evening before.

Mrs. Lavington replied, Miss Bellingham is the lady I mean. Who is your beauty? he replied, I don't know her name; but if the same lady, I'll dine, drink tea, and sup with you, nay, remain for life with you, if you engage her of the party. At this instant the Clifdens and the Allrights appeared on the opposite side of the Stein. Mrs. Lavington only said, "Remember your engagement," and ran off to be the first to announce that Philip Gower was violently in love with Miss Bellingham, without staying to tell him a word of her or her pedigree. He met Lord Charles Wynne, who rallied him a good deal on his last night's adventure, and then asked him if he remembered

bered a girl who stood by his mother while he told the miraculous story? he replied, he did. Lord Charles said, he had been advised by mamma to think of her for a wife; adding, but the best of the joke is, nobody knows who she is; her name is said to be Bellingham; an old tabby left her a swinging fortune, provided she would enjoy it and ask no questions till she is of age, and then, most likely, she may be owned by the butler. How would you, Gower, like papa with a corkscrew in his hand, and a napkin under his arm?

Mr. Gower recognized in this picture the female about whom he had taken a more than common interest. He was hurt to find her in a situation in which liberties might be taken by people who like to sport with the feelings of all around them. He enquired more particularly as to the real situation of Miss Bellingham, and, in part jest and

and part earnest, he came at the truth, as far as Lord Charles was acquainted. He pitied her extremely, as he saw she was likely to become a prey to some adventurer, who, having no principle, pursued only interest. He did not wonder at Lady Betty Wynne's advising her son to think seriously of a match with Helen, as he had long since spent his portion as a younger brother, and had since been living, or rather doing penance, on his mother's jointure, which she could very well contrive to spend without his assistance; so that the prospect of a good fortune, which she believed it was in Lord Charles's power to obtain, without many questions being asked as to settlements, particularly if Miss Bellingham, as she did not doubt, should be violently enamoured of him, who had captivated half the beauties of the metropolis, was an object worth her son's pursuit. He had now nothing
but

but a title to sell, and Helen was considered most likely to catch at such a bait. His Lordship still thought so well of himself and his attractions, that this young lady and her fortune seemed no object to him, being sure of any woman on whom he should deign to cast so favourable an eye as to make an offer of his hand. His mother was in earnest when she recommended his attentions to the heiress; she thought she had talked him into the same train of thinking, and that he was gone to make the first essay of gallantry. She was, however, highly disappointed when she came on the Stein, to find him walking, and in earnest conversation with two elegant females of a certain description, who were under the protection of two of his male friends, and with whom she was afraid Miss Bellingham might meet him, though at present she was not in the walk.

Her

Her Ladyship gave her son many side-glances of disapprobation ; but he was incorrigible, and continued on his incessant rattle, to the no small diversion of his companions.

Lady Betty joined the Clifden party, just at the precise moment when Mrs. Lavington was assuring the company that Gower was distractedly in love with her young friend—or *her fortune*, she added, with a loud laugh, which was joined in by the whole party. Miss Allrights observed that it would be an excellent match for Gower, who, she had heard, was a *natural* himself, and not overburthened with estates. He might take the lady belonging to whom ever Lady Levet pleased to fix her. Does he know who is his own parents? asked Lady Clifden ; if not, one does not know how the eclairsissement might terminate. No one could resolve this question, so they passed on with

with the conversation. Mrs. Lavington said the heart of her young friend stood a good chance of being disposed of before she left Brighton; for, to her knowledge, three candidates were already on the spot, and many more might be for ought she could tell.

All this time Lady Betty Wynne was quite silent, endeavouring to hear all she could as to Helen and her suitors. Finding that at present the young lady herself did not know of this inundation of admirers, she determined, if possible, to try to make the first impression in her son, Lord Charles's favour. She therefore recollected some orders she had forgotten to give at home, and stepped away as fast as she could to Mr. Dalling's, as she had been in habits of intimacy with his family, and was lucky enough to find Miss Moore and Miss Bellingham at home. She said that she came to pay a visit to the bride;
but,

but, as they were out, she would avail herself of the opportunity, and chat a little with them on a subject extremely near her heart, and heartily hoped it might not in the end prove uninteresting. This, then, she said was no other than that Lord Charles had lost his heart, and, looking particularly at Helen, she said that as yet she knew but one young lady at Brighton whom she considered as worthy of it, and who, she hoped, would give him hers in exchange. It was impossible to misunderstand her Ladyship; and the blushes of Helen convinced her that she felt the force of her allusion. Her Ladyship continued to pass the highest encomiums on her son, and told them of the lovely and elegant young women who would have been glad of their alliance: but, she said, Charles was very choice of his affections, and it gave her supreme pleasure that they had at last
fixed

fixed on an object every way worthy of them. That he had a vast deal of eccentric oddity about him, and an amazing fund of wit and humour, which sometimes led him into scrapes it was true, but then his good sense always extricated him, and he certainly had a good disposition.

To all these encomiums, and much more added by Lady Betty, neither Miss Moore nor Helen could make any reply. However, she prayed Miss Beltingham not to dispose of her own heart till she had given Lord Charles some chance of obtaining it. After her having gone through the whole pedigree of the Wynne's, she took her leave, not dissatisfied with her first reception, as Helen's blushes were interpreted in Lord Charles's favour, it being impossible, his mother thought, to see and not admire him. In town he was quite the fashion, and Lady Betty wished that there were
more

more misses of ton at Brighton, as then Helen might see him courted and admired. There were a set of young men and young women, who had come under a kind of engagement to speak in the highest terms of rapture of each other. In short, to keep each other continually under the public eye. By this means they might each catch some good-natured fool, who was not in the secret, and who, if ever they were admitted into the coterie, must pay by their liberty for their information. It has been often said that there are societies or circles of this kind in the world of authors or book makers.

As soon as her Ladyship had left them, Miss Moore asked her young friend what she thought of the visit and discourse of Lady Betty with regard to her son ? She replied that she thought Lord Charles a most disagreeable young man, having often been of parties where he was whilst she staid at Lady Clifden's

den's, though she had never been particularly introduced till they met at Brighton. Instead of his being admired by every female, he was laughed at by them all. She said she was told that the ladies often pretended to admire his follies, with the malicious intent of urging him to farther extravagances.

Miss Moore replied that he was of an ancient and respectable family ; that he might expect a woman of the highest fashion for his wife ; and that, therefore, he paid her a great compliment if he entertained any thoughts of asking her hand.

Helen felt a little hurt at this speech, and declared, if she remained single all her life, she would refuse to accept the honor, if in her option. However, she should certainly treat him with all possible respect, though certainly decline receiving him in any other light than as a friend. This she

could do upon the plea of her determination not to marry before she was of age.

When Mr. and Mrs. Dalling returned from their airing, they were informed of the visit of Lady Betty; and Mrs. Dalling was quite surprised to hear Helen declare against becoming Lady Charles Wynne: A title, she declared, would be so delightful; she had better deliberate a little—for Lord Charles appeared to her quite an elegant young man. Mrs. Dalling was enumerating all his qualifications, when Mr. Allright came to pay a visit to them, and was informed of the purport of Lady Betty's.

“Why,” replied the banker, “I always thought that a very cunning old dowager. Have her son indeed! Why he would spend as much in lavender water and essences in a month, as would keep that poor deserted family a whole year, alluding to the family in whom

Mr.

Mr. Gower, at whom he was inhumanly sneering, had taken so much interest. No! no! indeed, put your cash into better hands. What settlements could he make? I question if he has so much land as would grow as many flowers as compose that beau-pot at your window; a turnip and two carrots would never attain to a proper size on his estate."

However, this put the banker upon thinking it time to forward his own suit, if possible; as the same thought that struck Lady Wynne might strike other provident mothers who had spendthrift sons lounging on their jointures, and then the cash might not rest quietly in St. Mary Axe, nor Frank get the heiress, and so fix it there for ever. He would have been much more alarmed had he known that Miss Bellingham had been sought after in another quarter, where there seemed to be a parental claim.

It was totally out of his power to say

a word to Miss Moore that was not quite public on this visit ; but he determined to write to her on the subject on his return home. His daughters had displeased him, and driven him out by bringing to his house a whole bevy of officers and men whom he did not know. Miss Moore would regulate the line of visitors. In short, a mistress was necessary, and he would settle the matter out of hand. He spent the remainder of the morning in penning a tender letter to the object of his regard ; he was very particular, and made such offers as to settlements, in case of his demise, as induced her to confide the whole to Dr. Jackson, and solicit his opinion and advice on the occasion. Miss Moore did not give any immediate answer, but replied, in a short note, that she had a friend whom she wished to consult before she took so decisive a step, and that when she had

had come to a determination she would let Mr. Allright know ; at the same time she begged to offer her acknowledgments for the confidence he reposed in her, and assured him, that whether she accepted or rejected his proposals, the same sentiments would rest on her mind.

Miss Moore anxiously waited for a letter from the good Doctor, not only on her own account, but on that of Helen's, whose mind, like her own, was in a very unsettled state.

A fortnight had passed in all the frivolous gaieties of a watering-place, in which time Miss Bellingham and Mrs. Dalling had had their share in the attentions of the other sex. Lord Charles Wynne had not been able to remove the first impression made on the mind of the heiress. Indeed, he had rather added, by an overstrained wish to be agreeable, to the disgust she had

first entertained at his follies. However, he had in this time contrived to get into the good graces of Mr. and Mrs. Dalling, so that their house was as much his home as Lady Betty's, which had determined Helen to shorten her stay at Brighton. Indeed, she wished to return to Carleton, as she would be nearer the spot where the letters were addressed concerning her, and in the issue of which she felt herself so nearly concerned. She had but one regret at leaving this place of gaiety, which, however, she would hardly allow even to herself that she felt. This was the being deprived of the society of Mr. Gower, who had shewn her a most marked attention ever since the day she dined with him at Mrs. Lavington's; yet his behaviour had been truly respectful. She found him an intelligent, rational being, and though this might be thought strange, there

there are not many such to be met with in the purlieus of fashion. She sighed to think that they might never meet again. Often did she wish that fortune had given her such a brother:—of his family or connections she was uninformed. That they were respectable she did not doubt from the circle in which he moved. She had been teized to death by Mrs. Elderton and her son, who had essayed to make himself agreeable in all manner of shapes. Though he had done so without any success, yet vanity had so far operated on his weak mind, that he thought another fortnight would bring every thing into a proper train for Miss Bellingham's taking the name of Elderton. His mother believed the vain assertions of her son, and whispered it amongst their private friends that James would soon carry off the heiress from all the coronets that assailed her.

Lady Clifden, since she could not totally get rid of her, used to make her the butt of her ridicule, and did all in her power to strengthen both her and her son in the belief that he would be received at Carleton as master, before Christmas. Nay, she went so far as to say, that orders had been sent down to the steward to make up his accounts. This put Mrs. Elderton in such good humour that she never hinted a word of the bond. Besides, her eldest son was indirectly paying his addresses to Miss Allright; and as this lady was not troubled with many assiduous attendants, why she suffered him to make one in her suite. Her father was not displeased at this, for Mr. Elderton was possessed of a very good fortune, and a business that promised one still larger. He had hinted this frequently to Miss Allright, who, though she only made a laugh of the
young

young man, did not chuse to declare to her father, that a man of business was not the one she should chuse for a partner for life. A young dashing ensign in the guards had made some progress in her affections, who, she thought, had serious thoughts of her; when her maid informed her, that at the milliner's she had heard the captain was already married, and had left his wife and two children to spend the summer in the country with her relations, whilst he amused himself in coquetting with the gay and the giddy at Brighton. Miss Allright said it was no such thing, and she would not believe it; for he did not look like a married man. Indeed, if she judged of the married and single by a supposed tenderness of deportment in the former, there were few of that description who frequented the haunts of fashion, where every thing serious

was exploded. To such a height was this folly carried, that a gentleman actually went a mile out of his way rather than meet his nursery-maids and children, who were returning from a walk, fearing, that if they should oblige him to receive or return any of their innocent caresses, he should be the subject of ridicule of a few pert misses of ton, who were passing the same way.

CHAP. XIV.

FRANK ALLRIGHT had not yet joined the party, which was greatly wondered at by his sisters and the whole circle of their friends. Many enquiries had passed as to his health. Answers had been returned that he was well ; but that business prevented him from leaving town in his father's absence. This excuse was believed by none, as he had remained quietly at Carleton without ever considering how the business went on. Indeed, he was not entrusted with the management of any part of the concerns of the house.

The old Banker was glad that he had kept out of the present scene of dissipation, of the extreme of which he had no idea until he was an eye-witness of it. He heard, in St. Mary Axe, of thousands won and lost at the fashionable clubs at the west end of the town ; but that all this was conducted in so quiet and systematic a way he had no idea, before he was initiated into the gambling societies of the place : and then he wondered that more men were not ruined than there were, or that any estate remained for two generations in the same family. Every art and every bait was laid to ensnare the youth, whose passions misled their judgment ; and where this was found not to be the case, other stratagems were put in force to entrap avarice, or lull caution. Many had been taken in by compliments to their quickness of parts in not suffering them-

themselves to become dupes, and a little insight had been given them into "the secrets of the prison-house," until, supposing they were as deep as any one, their own vanity, to display their knowledge, had been the means of their falling at last into the snare, when the laugh was turned against them, and ruin convinced them that there were secrets yet to learn.

The truth was, Frank's finances would not admit of dashing, and to remain a tame and quiet observer, would not do for him. Had the old one come up to town, Frank would have gone down to Brighton. Billy Delaney was ready for the trip, having got rid of his sister, who was on a visit to papa and mamma. However, as it was, Frank made the best of town in summer, by introducing Billy to all his numerous friends at the west end of the town, whom nobody knew in
the

the city ; or if they did, they kept their knowledge a profound secret on the other side of Temple Bar. Billy's house was the rendezvous. After a late supper at Vauxhall, they took then an early breakfast with him, and departed so as to reach home before the city apprentices presented themselves half dressed, and half awake at the doors of their respective shops in order to adorn them and recommence the business of the day.

It was after one of these early breakfasts, when the party had separated to commune with their pillows, that Frank observing the sun rising in all its splendor, determined, instead of going home to bed, to walk towards the Park, and from thence to Hyde Park, in order to inhale the fragrant breezes of the morning. He sauntered down the Strand, where nothing was stirring but the old and decrepid guardians of
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the night, limping and hobbling away to their respective garrets and kitchens to deposit their lanthorns, and dream of dangers, which, had they presented themselves, their vigilance would not have prevented, except in a dream. These, with the market carts going to Covent-garden, and here and there a poor old woman seated at the corner of a street with salep and cakes, were all that disturbed the meditation of the young citizen, in his progress from the Exchange to Charing-cross ; where another and a more interesting scene for a while arrested his progress. This was no other than the gates of the Golden Cross Inn beset with travellers of different descriptions—some just come in, and others on the point of going out of town.

At the steps of a trunk-maker's shop, Frank took his stand, a silent observer of the hurried scene passing under his eye :

eye : The Portsmouth heavy coach was at the door ; the coachman was amusing his passengers with a volley of oaths, while the trunks and other luggage were placed in the boot and other parts of the coach : In the street stood different persons taking leave of their friends, who, by their tears evinced this to be a painful moment. The first person who got into the coach was a mulatto lady with a poor squab of a black slave girl, whom she amused herself with scolding for having a bit of bread and butter in her hand in her presence, though this, the girl said, was all the breakfast she was likely to get. She was obliged to throw this away, as she was not permitted to enter the coach with it in her hand. The girl wept, but obeyed, and followed her mistress. A young man, who soon, by his voice, betrayed his country to be Hibernia, now came up,
and

and swore plentifully at the chamberlain for not calling him time enough for breakfast. However, to make up for this, he sent him for a glass of *The Creator*, which proved nothing but a bumper of gin, which he hastily swallowed, and then took his seat beside the tawny squab, and her femme de chambre: Next followed a blooming and beautiful girl, attended by an elderly gentleman and lady, who, by the interest they took in her, soon shewed that they were her parents. After cordially embracing her, the gentleman put her and her mother into the coach, and hastily walked away, evidently under much agitation, which he would not allow the females to witness. The ladies had requested a seat in the front of the coach—this was denied. The lady of colour declared that she should not give up her seat to any one unless she was obliged to it,
and

and her companion, the Irishman, said, that if people were particular, where they sat, they should take post-chaises. : —that this was the first time he ever went in a dirty stage coach; but he was told at the office, “ first come first served.” That he believed now that he should alight and take a carriage to himself, for that his servant was not come with his baggage, and it was unpleasant to travel without attendants. Just at this moment a dirty porter arrived in great haste with a small wooden box, that evinced, by its many directions, that it had been a travelling companion time out of mind to some one. He enquired if Captain Macgou-wran was gone yet, when the Captain put his head out of the coach, and the porter seeing him, cried, “ Ah! here’s Teddy, your honour, come at last! Your father could not come himself, for my Lord was not come in from the club,

club, and he must not be abroad till he was in bed you know." The Captain evidently did not want to hear any more of his father's message, it being evident he was in no other station than my Lord's valet or porter. He threw Teddy out half-a-crown, and bid him brush. This he did as soon as he had deposited the wooden box, which contained the luggage of Captain Macgouwran. An elderly gentleman now appeared, and took his seat quietly, and also respectfully by the side of the young lady and her mother. Frank seeing the coach, as he thought, now ready to start, was going to pursue his walk, when looking up the yard of the inn, he perceived a procession moving slowly down the yard that completely arrested his attention. He thought that he could distinguish the clanking of chains, which raised his curiosity, and he stepped back again to

to his former stand. When the objects approached which had drawn his attention, how greatly was he surprized to find them actually a troop of felons, who had, by their several crimes, been sentenced to transportation to Botany Bay, and were to be conveyed on the roof of this very coach to Portsmouth, attended by their keepers. This roused the indignation of Frank, for he took an interest in the young lady and her mother, who appeared greatly shocked at the approach of such fellow-travellers. He asked the coachman whether it was a usual thing for stage coaches to carry felons at the same time with respectable passengers? He was answered by a question,—Have you a place either in, or outside of the coach, master?—He could not say that he had; but he assured him, that if he had, he should directly alight and get a post-chaise, for which the proprietors

etors of the coach should pay ; and he advised the passengers to do the same. He was hustled at a distance, directly, and a scene of horrid imprecation and general confusion ensued during the time the felons with their irons on were clambering into the boot, and on the top of the coach. As soon as they were settled, the coachman cracked his whip, and waving it in the air in triumph, nodded at Frank, and drove off at full gallop. As soon as they were gone, he asked what was to be done with those miserable wretches when they reached Portsmouth. He was informed by a man who had come from Newgate to see them off, that the coach would deliver them to the gaol at Portsmouth, and that in half an hour after a cart would carry them to a boat, which would deliver them on board the several transports intended to take them to Botany Bay.

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The fate of these poor wretches drew a sigh from his breast, and then he pursued his course toward the gates of St. James's Park, forgetting that they are never opened until a certain hour in the morning. He turned round and pursued his course without any obstruction, nothing being in the streets of Pall-mall or St. James's but a few carriages about the doors of the fashionable gaming-houses, with the coachmen and footmen asleep within them, whilst the master was putting that fortune at the stake of the dice that might banish both sleep and peace for ever from his breast.

At the door of the White Horse-cellar he was destined to behold the arrival of another stage coach, which contained one who created much more interest than the one of which he had witnessed the departure. This was the Gosport coach, which, on its stopping,

ping, out bounced a great ugly female full of consequence and impertinence : Frank thought he had before seen her somewhere, but could not then recollect where. However, her memory was better than his, and she nodded at him ; on which he went up to the coach, and gave his hand to a lovely girl about seventeen, whose countenance was full of innocence and interest. The old lady hurried into the Coach Office to arrange the removal of her baggage from the stage coach to a hack, which she directed to be immediately called. However, at the door of the office she beckoned the young lady and Frank to follow. He said, “ Your mother wishes you to follow her,” on which the young lady burst into tears, saying, “ I have no mother ! nobody that takes such care of me !”—This exclamation struck directly on the heart of young Allright :
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he thought then who is this old hag:—Perhaps this is some female decoyed to town under false pretences, and he then said, “The lady is a relation, I presume?”—“None! none, indeed!” she replied, with earnestness, “I never saw her before we got into the coach!” Here the old woman came up, and stopped their further conversation, saying, “Come, Miss, you are a stranger—I’ll take you home with me, and when people be up we may find your friends.” The girl cast an imploring eye on Frank, as seeming to say, “What shall I do?” His conveyed to her a degree of suspicion and doubt. “Come, where is your things,” asked the old lady. The young one hesitatingly, replied, I have only this bundle in my hand. Frank said,—“Where do your friends live? I will see you to them if you will give me leave.”

“You

“ You see her to her friend’s !” retorted the old woman, yes, indeed, set the fox to ’tend the geese ;—come, here is a coach.”—“ What shall I do ? Oh ! my loved friend and protectress, look down and direct me !” She immediately turned into the office, and said to herself, though loud enough to be heard, “ I will not go with that woman, let what will come of me !”

“ That’s right,” answered a man behind the counter, who was weighing the baggage of the passengers, “ She’s a bad one, I’ll promise ye.”

Frank caught the last words of the man, and going round some boxes, asked him who the woman was ; when he was, by half sentences, informed, that she often went into the country in quest of youth and inexperience. He then instantly recollected her in a house where he and his friends sometimes held their midnight orgies.

The young lady asked if she could get any bed in the house where she was. Frank instantly returned to the woman, saying that the young lady thanked her; but she preferred waiting at the inn till her friends should be stirring.

“Aye, aye,” said she, “I thought so, as soon as I was silly enough to nod at you, I thought you would be for providing her a lodging.” Frank, although no Joseph, felt the highest indignation at the vile insinuation of this harpy, and told her to leave the young lady where she was, as any protection, or indeed none, was better than hers. On which she got into the coach, not without speaking for some time with one of the fellows who ply and prowl about these inns where coaches stop at. As soon as she was gone, Frank attended the young lady into the house. They both felt themselves

selves in an awkward predicament, when retired to a private room, and neither liked to begin the conversation. The young lady sat down, and her face being covered with a handkerchief, Frank addressed her, saying,—“ I am led to believe some uncommon circumstances have thrown you thus unprotected into a stage coach. I do not wish to enquire farther than you may approve. If I can be of any use in seeing you to your friends, command me. At present a little rest will be necessary for you. I will send a proper person to attend you, and will wait on you again myself, before twelve o'clock. In the mean time I will pursue my walk. Taking his hat, he was going in quest of some of the females of the inn, when taking her handkerchief from her eyes, the young lady said, “ You know not, Sir, how sensible I am of your goodness in thus

interesting yourself in the fate of a poor solitary being, destitute of every thing but gratitude. I can explain to you my dreadful situation ; you will pity me, but cannot be of any farther service ; unless, indeed, you could recommend me to any good lady. Pardon me, Sir, for saying thus much. I do not know a single individual in London. I had a direction to one who would have protected me ; but that is lost, with all I valued in this world." Here a torrent of tears chased one another down the most beautiful cheeks that were ever formed by the hand of Nature. These made their impression on the heart of Frank, and he swore to her that nothing should prevent his protecting and serving her, and that if he had any interest in the female world, he would exert it in her favour. She did not reply in words, but her looks

looks on this assurance fully told him that she was sensible of his goodness.

He insisted on going and leaving her to the refreshment of a few hours sleep; at the same time cautioning her against quitting the house she was then in before he returned. She promised that she would not. He then took his leave, after recommending her to the care of the chamber-maid, promising to reward her attention on his return at noon.

The park, and all its refreshing breezes, were forgotten, in the contemplation of what was to be done with the lovely stranger, and what could have reduced her to the deserted state she now appeared in.— Who was She? And where could she have designed to go to when she took the coach for London? These and a thousand other thoughts assailed the young Citizen as he measured his steps

back to St. Mary Axe, where he arrived just as the chief clerk and the other young men of the house were sitting down to breakfast. He pretended to be just come in from spending a night in the country; but this seemed to remain in doubt on the minds of some of the company. He only waited till breakfast was done, and immediately called one of the young men who had been many years in their house, and taking him into a room alone, enquired for his mother and sisters, and asked him if he thought he had influence enough with them to induce his mother to admit a female of his recommendation into their house. The mention of a female so recommended, seemed to stagger the young man as to what answer he should make. However, he said, indeed I cannot tell; but as I am certain that you would not affront us so far as to propose any
improper

improper person, I will ask my mother, and let you know to-morrow morning. They parted; but Frank's mind was too full of the beautiful girl he had left at the White Horse Cellar to allow of his taking any rest; and he waited impatiently for the hour when they should meet again. He thought that he might fairly judge from the artless innocence of her manners, and also of her countenance, that she was of that description of females, for whom he might safely claim the protection of her own sex; who, he knew, on these points, were rigidly tenacious. Therefore he must find out enough of her story to put her character beyond all doubt, before the next morning, when he was to have the answer of Mrs. Western to his request. He hoped that she would be induced to oblige him, as she lived upon a small income, and sometimes, he knew, took lodgers, if

well recommended, in order to provide for her daughters, two of which she had at home, from whence they were not likely soon to depart, being extremely plain young women.

CHAP. XV.

BEFORE eleven Frank found himself sitting in the coffee-room of the White Horse Cellar, waiting the summons, when the young Lady was ready to receive his visit.

Soon she sent word that she would be glad to see him, and on his entering, she came up to him, smiling, though it was evident that smiles had not been predominant in his absence. She held a letter in her hand, saying, that she was so happy as to receive a line from a Lady whom she did not know where to have found if she had not written to her; and how she had

found out she was in London, was to her a still greater wonder. This declaration struck her hearer with much suspicion. He begged to know from whom she received the letter; she replied, that a very decent woman brought it, and said, that she was to conduct her to the Lady who wrote to her; but as she had promised not to leave the place where he had left her, and had so kindly taken an interest in her, the people of the house advised her to beg to stay another hour where she was. Frank instantly left the room to ask some questions, and found, that both his and their suspicions rested on her fellow-traveller.—He returned to the parlour and said, if she would not think it impertinent, he begged to see the letter.—This was instantly put into his hand. It was evidently, both as to style and penmanship, the work of an uneducated person.

person. The purport was only to say, that her friend had by accident heard of her surprising deliverance and arrival in town, and that she had sent a servant to conduct her to her house. When he had read the letter he said, I may also congratulate you on another deliverance, for this letter is written by the wretch with whom you this morning parted. The information alarmed the young Lady greatly. She said, "Believe, me, Sir, I am truly grateful for your goodness to an entire stranger, as I am, fatherless and friendless also, if this letter is a deception. But it is proper I explain my real situation: From my birth I have been unfortunate; my story is very short:—My father and mother, as I understand, were poor people, who rented a small farm in this country, on which they failed. At that time there was great encouragement given for this

class of people to emigrate to America. They were induced to seek in another country for that independence they could not secure in their own. I was quite a child, so do not remember anything but that we lived quite alone, and surrounded with woods ; from entering which, I had numberless cautions. Yet these did not prevent me from straying beyond the bounds prescribed, which alarmed my parents so much, that after a few years they proposed to carry me to New-York, where I was to be placed at a school, and they were to see me as often as they conveniently could. This scheme was put into execution, and I remained at school very happy until news came that the Indians had made an incursion into that part of the country on which our farm stood ; that they had carried every thing off with them that was moveable, and then set fire to the buildings.

buildings. There was much search made after my parents, but no tidings could ever be heard of them, and it is supposed that they fell victims to their savage captors, at some subsequent time, as no traces of murder could be seen either in the dwelling or in the woods. This news affected me greatly. Both the mistress and my companions commiserated my forlorn state. One young lady always professed a sincere regard for me; she loved her dear Mary, she would often declare, as a sister. When I was left thus destitute, she implored her parents to let me be as her sister, and live with them, as she was an only child, and they in very independent circumstances. Her request was complied with, and we left school together. "Alas! I was doomed to be wretched," said she. "We had not been at home more than a year; when my dear Charlotte caught a fever, and died; she entreated her parents never.

never to forsake me till I heard of my own, if they were still living. They promised and kept their word; for they loved me as they had done their daughter. Having a wish to return to England, where they were born, and having realized a good fortune, they embarked with their effects in a ship of their own, promising to consider me as their child in future, I had no regret in quitting America, on whose unhospitable shores I had lost my parents. Our passage was prosperous, until we were nearly in prospect of landing, when a storm came on about a month ago. Perhaps, Sir, you may remember hearing of the ship *Eliza*, from New York, being lost off the Isle of Wight, and that every soul on board perished. "Oh! had I shared the fate of my benefactors," exclaimed the afflicted girl, "it would have been happy for me."

As soon as she was composed, she resumed

sumed her unhappy story, which greatly affected her hearer, whose heart was susceptible of sympathy for the unfortunate of any sex or nation, but more so for the one he then sat beside.

“ The storm was sudden, and its effects instantaneous, as I heard a dreadful cry of “ We are all lost ! ” from the deck. On this Mrs. Elton and her husband, with myself, rushed on deck—all was confusion ; the ship, they said, was sinking fast. Guns were fired for assistance. Before we went on the deck, the good Mr. Elton ran back to the cabin, and brought thence a small box and pocket-book. The latter he gave into my hand, saying, put that in your pocket : if it is the will of God to preserve you, you are not destitute. I will, if possible, preserve this box ; but I fear we are all lost ! Boats were coming from the shore, but, alas ! too late : the water had reached nearly to the
upper

upper decks. Every one was providing for their own safety. My good friends were clasped in each other's arms, offering up prayers to the Almighty, when a dreadful shriek deprived me of what little remaining senses I retained, and I remember nothing of the dreadful scene, until I found myself in a small room, surrounded with strangers; anxious to render me assistance. As soon as I was able, I enquired for Mr. and Mrs. Elton. I soon perceived that they were not preserved, by the mournful countenances of all around. I wished that Providence had permitted that I should have shared their fate, and I now see that I am destined to be miserable."

Frank Allright assured her, that he would use his utmost endeavours to procure her the protection of some respectable females; and assured her, that
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he had already made application for that purpose.

Mary Hervey (for that was the name of the young lady) assured him of her gratitude for his kindness, saying, " You must think it strange, Sir, that I came to London in so destitute a state; but, Mrs. Elton has a sister, who is house-keeper in a nobleman's family, near Grosvenor square; and I thought I might, by enquiry, find her out, and that she might advise me what to do in this my friendless state.

Frank enquired the nobleman's name, and, on being informed it was Lord Belhaven, he said that the family had been out of England for more than a twelvemonth; but that he would go to the house, and make further enquiries when he left her. In the mean time, he begged that she would divest herself of any gloomy apprehensions, as he would defray all expences incurred,
and

and he hoped the next morning to put her under the protection of a worthy family.

She thanked him; but said, “ No, Sir, it will be unnecessary that you defray my expences; for luckily I have retained the pocket-book given into my hands in the moment of destruction to my benefactors. She here pulled it out of her pocket, and shewed him that it contained bank and other bills to a considerable amount. He was too delicate to examine minutely her little store; but said, if hereafter he could be of use in negociating any of her bills, he should with pleasure execute her commands. He was sensible that this poor girl stood in a very peculiar situation; and that his interference might be the cause of rendering her suspected. He therefore had recourse to the mistress of the house, relating, in a few words, Miss Hervey’s story, stating the interest he took in her,

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and also that he was about the next day to place her in a good and respectable family. He requested, in the mean time, if there was any young lady about the house, that she would give her society to them for the remainder of the present day. The woman was delighted with the care and attention of so young a man, to preserve the propriety of female character, and immediately sent a servant for a niece of her own, who lived in the next street, and soon introduced her to Miss Hervey, who was herself greatly relieved by the company of a third person. She endeavoured to appear chearful; but the remembrance of such recent melancholy occurrences would frequently cast a gloom over her features.

At dinner time, Mr. Allright offered to take his leave, but the ladies begged that he would not leave them alone; besides Miss Hervey expected in the evening

evening the person who pretended to come from the nobleman's, as she had requested to remain where she was till that time. Frank said, that as she had not gone at her first visit, he did not believe she would venture to call again. However, it was proper that she should be protected in case the wretch should presume to practise any other of her tricks.

Miss Hervey's mind was in a state of great anxiety. She found herself in the metropolis with no friend to advise her, and under the protection of an utter stranger, who, it was true, had treated her with extreme delicacy; but she knew not how her story might be believed by the person to whom she must apply, the housekeeper of Lord Belhaven. She ventured to request, after dinner, that Mr. Allright would go as far as Grosvenor square, and enquire for Mrs. Elton, who, she was still inclined,

clined to hope, was not out of England, as her brother had received letters from her, dated Grosvenor square, within the last six months; and it was probable she might have the care of the house, in the absence of the family. He immediately complied with the request, and soon reached the house of Lord Belhaven, where he found the family just returned from their journey to the continent. On enquiring for Mrs. Elton, he was informed that she had been dead about six weeks. With this melancholy news he returned to Piccadilly; for the servants appeared either too busy, or too unconcerned, to offer him any other information.

Mary saw, in his reluctance to relate the answer he had received, that no good was to result from this enquiry. She begged that he would tell her the worst; for that she was used to disappointments, and the worst had befallen her

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her already in the loss of both parents and friends. Frank then informed her that Mrs. Elton was no more ; but, at the same time, assured her that she would find the same kindness and protection with his friends, to whom he earnestly hoped to be able to conduct her the next morning, if they were at home. He said this, not having had the answer of Mrs. Western ; because, if she should refuse to receive her, he might put it off thus without wounding her delicacy by a refusal. When he took his leave for the night, he prayed Miss Hervey not to lose her spirits at this last disappointment. She promised what was out of her power, to be resigned to her present situation.

With great anxiety did Frank All-right pass the night. The next morning was to decide whether he could put Miss Hervey under good protection ; and he knew it would be difficult for him,

him, a young man, to get a family of credit to take a young and beautiful woman into their house, with no other testimony of her former good character than he had to offer.

At the usual hour, Mr. Western made his appearance, and as soon as he was closeted with Mr. Alhright, said that his mother would wish to have some conversation with him previously to her final determination. At the same time he said his mother wished to comply with his request, and he did not doubt but every thing would be settled as he wished. Frank instantly took a hackney coach, and drove to Mrs. Western's. He related to her the story of Miss Hervey just as it really was, and gave her his word of honor as to the truth. When she very frankly told him that she was greatly interested in the fate of the young Lady, and would consent to take her under her protection, provided he mentioned her having done so to his father

father and sisters on their return to town. On this last proposal he hesitated, fearing lest he might incur the displeasure of his father, and he was sure to encounter the ridicule of his sisters, without being certain that they would give any sanction to Miss Hervey, as she had not any fashion to recommend her. He mentioned the cause of his hesitation; and Mrs. Western, knowing the disposition of the old banker, and allowing that certainly he might blame his son's conduct, and, at the same time, pitying the young lady, said, then she must insist, if Miss Hervey was received into her family, that he should not make his visits either frequent or long, and that they should always be received in the presence of some of the family. To this last proposal he readily consented; and Mrs. Western promised to accompany him in the evening to Piccadilly. He returned home, much elated with the success of his project, and

and found there that Billy Delaney was waiting for him. Frank would gladly have left him in this situation, until his return from Piccadilly; but as he rapped at the door, Billy presented himself in the hall, and there was no avoiding him. He had a plan to spend the remainder of the day with a party at Richmond, and would take no denial—his friend must join him. It was in vain to plead business, or prior engagements; not even the want of cash was allowed; for, on these occasions, Billy always settled the accounts, and posted down his friend's share in the red book.—At last, after a promise (which he never intended to keep) of meeting him at the Gloucester coffee-house, they parted. Every thing being arranged for Miss Hervey's removal, at seven o'clock, a coach conveyed Mrs. Western and Mr. Allright to Miss Hervey, whose apprehensions immediately vanished.

nished at sight of the good lady, who, in her turn, felt for so young and beautiful a creature, thrown, as it were, upon the mercy of the world, without any friend to advise her. She was greatly pleased also with the goodness of disposition of the young gentleman, who, unlike the young men of the present day, who prey upon the innocent and unprotected, had sought an honourable asylum to save from ruin her whom Providence had cast upon his care.

Frank Allright durst not examine his own breast too nearly; he found sentiments inspired that he durst not acknowledge even to himself, in favour of this young stranger. He would most willingly have attributed all his attentions to her situation. However, he determined, having once acted as he ought, not to deviate from propriety; and if he found the object as deserving as he then believed her to be, never to desert

sert her till she found a better friend than himself. Above all, he determined to keep the adventure a secret from all his male acquaintance, fearing lest he should meet their ridicule, or perhaps what he most dreaded, a rival, though he was not sensible that his heart was so deeply interested in Miss Hervey. He was quite satisfied with himself, and, for the first time in his life, wondered why young men did not seek to protect, instead of hunting to destroy, by every art, the characters of the softer sex. He did not know much of the disposition of Mrs. Western, and still less of that of her daughters; but they were respectable, and he had often heard his father mention their's as a man of unblemished honor and integrity. He could have wished that the son, at this particular juncture, had resided any where else but under the same roof with Miss Hervey; but he was not

under any violent apprehension when he contemplated his own person in a large mirror, which he often resorted to when any doubts arose of this nature.

CHAP. XVI.

MISS Bellingham was quite tired of the frivolous scene before her, and anxiously waited the arrival of the wished for letter from the Rectory at Carleton. Miss Moore as anxiously waited the arrival of this letter on two accounts; both of which materially concerned her future establishment. That which related to Helen, she believed, would turn out of no consequence to either of them, as, had the mother of Miss Bellingham been living, Miss Moore believed that Lady Eleanor Levet

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would

would not have left her so totally unacquainted with the circumstance.

She was most anxious to know what would be Dr. Jackson's opinion of the overtures of Mr. Allright. She was herself in doubt as to the propriety of her listening to them at her time of life, and in the circumstances in which they both were. She foresaw that two unmarried daughters would be but unpleasant companions to a mother-in-law, who brought little else than prudence into the family; for her annuity was too trifling to be at all counted upon by ladies, who could, if permitted, spend it all at a fashionable breakfast. Their notions of expence had greatly risen since their sister had entered the fashionable world. They now ridiculed their ball at Carleton without mercy; though, at the time it was given, Miss Moore knew that they believed it truly elegant.

They

They incessantly chattered of dejeunés, fêtes, concerts, and routs, and all the scenes of dissipation that were to entertain and delight them through the *dear winter months*. To check all this, she believed Mr. Allright wished to transplant her into his family. But what sort of life could she expect? After revolving all this in her mind, she determined not to accept the charge of such a family, unless Mr. Allright first provided for his children; so that they might form establishments for themselves. She knew that they had relations who would be glad to receive them, and with whom they would rather live, than with her. That Lady Clifden herself would receive them into her own family, she did not doubt, as she had often hinted that she would be happy if Miss Bellingham would determine to take part of her house till she was of age and fixed in one of her

own. Miss Moore did not recollect that Lady Clifden counted upon the numberless uses she could make of Miss Bellingham and her fortune, whilst her sisters would be dead incumbrances on her, and also spies upon all her actions.

Mr. Allright happening to call the same morning, and Miss Moore being entirely alone, he had an opportunity to urge his suit without interruption: and Miss Moore had also one, to make her objections, and declared her wishes in case she should determine to become the Alderman's bride. As to her scruples with regard to parting with Helen who had been left, as it were, to her care, he instantly removed all uneasiness on that head, by declaring that he wished rather to add to the protection of that young lady, than to deprive her of any. He hoped that she might be induced to let Holmby Lodge, and become

come an inmate of the Grove House, until she was of age, or determined to change her present state, and said that he would make it a particular study to accommodate every thing to Miss Moore's and her wishes.

Miss Moore replied that she was abundantly sensible of his kindness in this proposal, but that he must recollect that he had daughters, who might not wish to accommodate to her wishes so much as to consider Miss Bellingham's society as any acquisition. Indeed it was not likely that they would be brought to accord at all with any such arrangements. Besides it would not be proper to place Miss Bellingham in a family where there was an unmarried man.

Mr. Allright at once set these objections at nought, saying, that whenever she agreed to take upon her the management of his family, all these

objections should be done away, and all parties satisfied. To this he pledged himself, would she allow him to hope.

At this period in the discourse, Mrs. Dalling's sociable stopped, and put an end, for the present, to the conversation.

On their alighting, Mrs. Dalling went directly upstairs.—Miss Bellingham came into the parlour, declaring how glad she was to be at home again, as neither Dalling nor Caroline had spoken a word to each other during their ride, and she could not think what was the matter.

Mr. Dalling never entered the house, but walked towards the Stein.

Mr. Allright soon took his leave.—Miss Moore was not much surprized at Mr. Dalling's being out of humour, as his wife exhibited nothing but a giddy thoughtlessness in her manner, that evinced

evinced all her regard for him to be centered in self, and self gratification. She ran with avidity after every folly that presented itself, and evidently shewed a restlessness if she spent an hour at home that was not appropriated to adorn herself for admiration in public. She had become the decided beauty of the place; of consequence she set the fashions, and carried this to its highest pitch; no sooner had she worn a cap or hat, and it was admired, then she laid it aside, knowing that all her friends would order the like of her milliner, and another was to be invented that she might lead them into another expence.

Both Helen and Miss Moore had taken the liberty to hint that she did not act with the propriety they could have wished to have observed. She always turned their admonitions off with a laugh, promising to behave better in

future, and saying that the milliners were more in fault than she was; for that if they did not bring such delightful, pretty, and also becoming ornaments, she should not be tempted to buy them.

Miss Moore often told her, that if she continued to indulge a propensity to buy all the idle toys and ornaments she saw, she would ruin her husband in a short time, and that the very people she enriched, would be the first to laugh at her folly. She had however, long desisted from admonishing her, as she found herself unattended to, and now rested satisfied that Miss Bellingham had not adopted such a mode of conduct: and, least example should lead her to adopt it, she had advised her not to go with Mrs. Dalling, when she sauntered from shop to shop, with no other view, than to be envied by those females who had not the power to

to render themselves ridiculous, by lavishing the money of their husbands on the *marchands du mode* of the place.

Miss Moore thought it now a proper time to speak of returning home, as this, she said, might induce Mrs. Dalling to indulge her husband in the first wish of his heart, that of taking her down to the Abbey, whither he had intended going on their marriage : but, as she proposed a few weeks at Brighton, he easily yielded to her first request, not thinking that a few weeks at a fashionable watering place, could be attended with any farther ill consequence, than that of spending a little more money than might be necessary at home. Caroline Archer knew not half the dissipation of fashionable life, till she was instructed by all the women who envied her good fortune, and who hoped to bring her down to their own level. They even

even joined in the cry as to her extreme beauty, though now and then a little envy would check them, and then they brought their dear angel down to the standard of a common beauty. The men laid violent seige to her heart, which, though she was married, had not yet escaped out of her own possession. She married for the pleasure of being her own mistress, a privilege that induces many young women to give their hand to the first wealthy suitor that offers, and which occasions so much domestic disquiet, at least, for the rest of their lives, if no worse comes of such thoughtless and immoral conduct. The *petits maitres* of Brighton had taught Mrs. Dalling her own consequence; and that she must not yield a jot to an assuming husband.

Dalling had indulged her in her first search after admiration; nay, he enjoyed all the fine compliments paid to her.

her beauty, as it was a tribute to his own taste. After having been flattered on all sides, and by both sexes, nothing common or rational could please Mrs. Dalling. She continually sighed for fresh admiration, and she never sighed in vain: for she had all the fashionable men of the place at her morning levees, and all their attentions whenever she went abroad, or appeared in the rooms.

Lady Clifden had tried every art to seduce some of her train to desert and attend upon her, but without success. She had watched, with the eye of a lynx, as had her two sisters, to see if Mrs. Dalling seemed to give a preference to any of her followers: but, as general admiration was her aim, she dealt her nods and smiles with a perfect equality. However, what these ladies could not find out, had become rather too obvious to Dalling himself, and

and he feared he had got a rival in the Duke of Denbeigh, who was constantly at the elbow of his wife, and who, when he was not present, was always out of humour.

It was this discovery that had occasioned the silent and sullen ride from which they were just returned. Before they went out, Mr. Dalling had remonstrated on the impropriety of a married woman always walking and talking with a man of the Duke of Denbeigh's known principles.

Mrs. Dalling had assumed a high tone on the occasion, and her husband had assured her, that had she been as candid a few months back, she might have been happier: but, as it was, he could only assure her, that he valued her character too much to remain longer on the present spot than that day week, when she must prepare to remove to the Abbey.

The

The servant announcing the sociable, and Miss Bellingham entering to accompany them, put an end to the first altercation, which took place before six weeks had elapsed after their union. It was well that Miss Bellingham was of the party. There might, otherwise, have been rather too much acid (as Mrs. Sullen in the Comedy expresses it) in this matrimonial tête à tête.

On Miss Bellingham's going upstairs, she went into Mrs. Dalling's dressing-room, where she was set writing a note, which she instantly put up in her port folio on her friend's entrance. Helen said, "I see you are engaged, so I won't interrupt you;" and was going to pass on to her own chamber, when Caroline called her back, saying, "What do you think? Dalling is jealous of the Duke, and will take me away from this delightful place."

Her

Her friend replied that she was very sorry to hear it, and she hoped that Mrs. Dalling would be more circumspect in future as to her conduct.

She burst into a violent laugh, and said, "What do you think I am to be a slave, and suffer myself to be locked up because I am married? No, indeed, not I; I mean no harm, and will talk and flirt with all the world, if I chuse."

"That's right," cried the Duke of Denbeigh, who stood at the door and heard Mrs. Dalling's determination, "I love a woman of spirit."

Mrs. Dalling told him he might come in, as she was just going to give orders for her removal.

"Leave Brighton!" said he, "that is impossible, you cannot determine on so atrocious an act."

Mrs. Dalling replied, that it was Mr.

Dal-

Dalling's intention, "and you know I must go if he does."

"Aye," returned the Duke, "but tell him he shall not remove, and he must obey. Must he not, Miss Bellingham?"

She excused herself from determining what Mr. Dalling ought or ought not to do; but said, she knew her friend would act with propriety: therefore her opinion would be superfluous.

Mr. Dalling passed the door of the room, and called, in a very angry tone of voice, for his valet. He attended his master's summons, who, in a few moments, sent for his wife's woman, and desired her to tell her lady, that Sir James and Lady Dalling were arrived.

On this information, which disconcerted Mrs. Dalling not a little, the Duke took his leave, execrating old people

people for pursuing the young, and preventing them from enjoying themselves. He obtained a promise that she would look in at the rooms if only for a moment.

The information, just received, disconcerted Mrs. Dalling not a little. Though she did not stand in awe of her husband, yet to meet his father and mother, rather alarmed her. She knew they were what she called, hum drum people, whose notions of life and manners were something of the complexion of her husband's. Besides, she considered them as predisposed to dislike her; and, as this was impressed on her mind, she did not find much satisfaction in encountering their scrutinizing eyes. She sent to Mr. Dalling a note, to come to her dressing-room and be a reasonable being, as she wanted to know whether she should wait on his mother before dinner.

He

He loved her too well to remain long angry, when she shewed a disposition towards reconciliation. Indeed he had felt rather a degree of dissatisfaction with himself; for insisting so peremptorily on their removal, as he believed that his wife's disposition, naturally of a gay turn, led her into those lively sallies that sometimes displeased him, without any meaning on her part, other than that proceeding from high spirits. She had assured him that the Duke's attention pleased her, because it vexed the ill-natured and envious, and that she only encouraged his attentions on this account. This had satisfied him, because, as the Poet expresses it,—“What we wish we easily believe.”

But this is a dangerous experiment: the encouragement of one man, in order to vex another, has often ended in a serious disaster to the party themselves, and a woman's character has been lost,

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in the public eye, e'er she herself was conscious of the least impropriety. She is like a fly in the web of a spider, the more she endeavors to disentangle herself, the more she involves herself in the inextricable labyrinth: for the very necessity of defence, proves, in the eye of envy, the existence of some real ground of imputation.

Dalling and his wife were soon on the very best terms, and descended to dinner in good spirits, after having sent a note to express their happiness at the arrival of Sir James and his Lady, and to request permission to wait on them in the evening.

Both Miss Moore and Miss Bellingham were rejoiced at the apparently happy reconciliation, and considered the arrival of Mr. Dalling's family as a very happy circumstance, as this would naturally take up much of Caroline's time, and Lady Dalling's example and
pro-

propriety of conduct, might be some restraint on her exuberant flow of spirits.

The messenger returned with a note from her Ladyship, requesting to see Mr. Dalling alone, as soon as he pleased, and when matters had been properly adjusted, Sir James and she would return with him, and spend the evening with the ladies, provided their engagements could allow of a visit on so short a notice, otherwise Lady Dalling would expect to see Mr. and Mrs. Dalling to breakfast the next morning.

As soon as the note was read, Caroline very imprudently exclaimed, "a reprieve ! a reprieve ! Do, James, go to your mother, and I will breakfast with her."

Miss Moore gave her a look of reprehension, and her husband one of displeasure, saying, "Then you won't receive Lady Dalling to night ?—What can

can she think of this inattention?—Every engagement ought to give way, when she condescends to pay the first visit.” Turning to a servant, he desired him to say; that in half an hour, he would wait on Sir James.”

Mrs. Dalling excused herself, on the pretence of being apprehensive at the idea of seeing his family, as they had not been consulted on her marriage. But she begged that he would prevail on them to return with him, saying, that it would be time enough for her to go to the rooms after they were gone.

This important matter being arranged, Mr. Dalling departed for his father’s inn, as they had not got a house previous to their arrival.—He was received with much ceremony by his mother, and with something of anger by Sir James. However, after an hour’s discussion, and some concessions in point of family arrangements in the
money

money way, all altercation ended, and they began to enquire after Mrs. Dalling's accomplishments, and what society she had formed at Brighton. Mr. Dalling mentioned some, such names as he thought most respectable, leaving out, however, some of those whom his wife considered as the first rate people.

His mother said, that her extreme youth made it dangerous to visit such public places, without the company of some one who could discriminate; as the company she fixed herself in at her first entré in life, would determine as to the respectability of her connections in future. However, Lady Dalling said she was anxious to see her, and would attend Mr. Dalling as soon as he pleased. He informed his mother that Miss Moore and Miss Bellingham made a part of his family.

At this she seemed much pleased, for though she had never seen either

of these ladies, she knew that Miss Moore had been the friend and companion of Lady Eleanor Levet, the proudest woman of her day, and of Miss Bellingham she had heard the history, and also a good character.

Mrs. Dalling received them with propriety and respect, Miss Moore having instructed her on this head before they arrived. Mr. Dalling introduced his guests. They soon became tolerably familiar, as much so as was possible, considering the dissimilarity of years, and also of manners of the party.

Soon after tea was dismissed, Mr. Dalling having forgotten to inform his servants that they saw no company that evening, without any ceremony in rushed Lord and Lady Clifden, with her Ladyship's two sisters, and Lord Charles Wynne. "Ah! Dalling, how are ye?" was the salutation of Lady Clifden,

Clifden, and his Lordship begged first to be allowed to worship the divinity of the place, and then he was, he said, at all their services. This rencontre confounded all the family. Lady Dal-ling drew up her chin many inches above its usual height, and Sir James began to hem. When his son said, "I must first have the honor of introducing my father and mother to the party, and then I'll answer you. All eyes were presently turned to a pair, the direct opposite in all points to the present vociferous set, whose conversation was now stopped. A vacant stare and curtsie, given and exchanged, put them all again at their ease, at least the visitors, who determined to be very fashionable on this occasion. The Miss Allrights and Lord Charles amused themselves in quizzing the old folks in a tolerably audible voice, until some rather severe looks from Miss Moore induced them, when they

gave way to merriment at the expence of all parties, to remove to a more convenient distance. Lady Clifden excused herself for making a short visit, as she had promised to call at fifty places, previous to her appearing at the rooms. No one opposed her departure, and the whole groupe made their exit with as little ceremony as they had made their entrée.

As soon as the society had again assumed the same tone of gravity in which they were before the gay party discomposed them, Lady Dalling asked her son if they were not the banker's daughters? he replied in the affirmative. She said they appeared city bred girls; and the married one, she supposed, was apeing the folly of her superiors, which she hoped Lady Clifden reduced to a caricature; for indeed, as she herself did not associate with vice in any rank, she said she was not a judge. Lord Clifden,

den, she said, had rendered himself both ridiculous and contemptible by his union with such a family.

Dalling, knowing the family pride of his mother, considered this last stroke as aimed at himself as well as his Lordship. Sir James did not give any opinion, but entered into conversation with Miss Moore, to whom he paid many compliments. He also chatted with his young daughter-in-law, and seemed to be brought into a tolerably conversible humour. Lady Dalling, in the course of this first visit, hinted, that she supposed Mrs. Dalling must be impatient to see Bentley-Abbey, where she might be likely to fix her residence in future; for she did not by any means approve of people's living so much from home, and mixing with the wealthy tradespeople; those who got their wealth no one knew how; whose only consequence was maintained by their out-

ward appearance; and who really possessed nothing of the gentleman or gentlewoman but what was furnished by the taylor, milliner, and mantua-maker. Miss Moore very good naturedly took the part of the wealthy, but unallied and untitled, part of the community. It was rather hard, she observed, that industry might not take a little relaxation without censure. Lady Dalling replied, so it would be indeed; but when she condemned this class of society, she begged to be understood to mean the insolent and upstart members, who held their heads above even nobility if unaccompanied with equal wealth; and who, by crowding to all places of public resort, elbowed the more refined and rational people out of every public place. Besides, they raised the price of every thing, not caring what they gave for any article of dress, or of luxury for the palate, so as they
disappointed

disappointed another of getting it. If one objects to the price of any thing, one is told Mr. such-a-one's maitre d'hotel will give any price for it. In short, said she, people who prey upon the vitals of society are to be met with in such places as this; and though one does not actually associate with these, one must mix with them in public.

Mr. Dalling endeavoured to turn the conversation, by relating to his mother the many suitors that assailed his fair visitor, who, blushing, declared that Mr. Dalling was only inclined to laugh at her. The evening went off tolerably well, and Mrs. Dalling was quite happy when her Ladyship took out her watch, declaring that it was ten o'clock, and that she had not been out of her own house at so late an hour for a long time. On taking her leave, she desired to see her daughter the next morning to breakfast, and the whole

family to dinner, as she had procured a house, to which they were then going. The invitation was accepted, and Sir James and his Lady departed.

Mrs. Dalling said nothing, but, in her heart, she most truly hated the good Lady, whose old-fashioned manners and maxims boded little cordiality between the two families. Now when Mr. Dalling married Caroline Archer, he conceived that she would resign herself entirely to the guidance of his mother; and that he should, by her proper conduct, ensure himself a domestic companion, who would render his home pleasant to himself and their mutual friends. He believed that ignorance of the fashionable world, and a disposition prone to gratitude, would effect this wish, without once consulting the previous disposition which was to be thus acted upon. The features, not the mind, was Mr. Dalling's guide in
his

his choice of a wife: this beauty still led him captive.. He believed that a very short period would put an end to all the apparent levity of her disposition ; and that, at Bentley Abbey, Mrs. Dalling would become every thing his fondest hopes could paint.

CHAP. XVII.

MRS. DALLING flew, or rather her horses, flew to the dear rooms, and the charming parties to be met with there, where she related, in the most melancholy tone, and with the most sorrowful countenance, the penance she had been doing, and that she was about to undergo, in her removal to Bentley-Abbey. All the males pitied her, and advised her to endeavour to gain a few weeks longer. Two or three of her female hearers did not think her situation so very bad, as they would have taken Mr. Dalling and all his incumbrances, such

such as Bentley-Abbey, &c. without repining; and, in truth, so did she at the time she married, but a few weeks of admiration and dissipation, had materially altered the face of affairs. Lady Betty Wynne had seen the Abbey, and described it as a venerable pile of building, situated in a delightful spot, and abounding with every convenience and comfort, and where Mr. Dalling's ancestors had flourished coeval with the surrounding oaks, and where, she said, she hoped to see his children grow up the friends and fathers of his tenants. Caroline laughed at the grave rebuke of Lady Betty Wynne, who had always herself, during the life of her husband, fled from their country seat as she would have done from a prison, and, since his death, had never once visited it. Lady Clifden whispered to Mrs. Dalling, to give her Ladyship an invitation to spend the summer at the

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Abbey,

Abbey, observing that she might safely risque it; as a watering place, and now and then a journey to Bath, was the only ones she took from the dear capital, as she often called London. Mrs. Dal-ling was afraid to make the experiment, unless she could have contrived to bring the Earl in her suite. She had no taste for the company of Lord Charles, although he had offered to teach her to paint on China, the last new stitch in netting, and, besides all this, to furnish her with the last new pattern for hearth-rugs and carpet-work.

Mrs. Elderton and Mrs. Lavington, with the two children (as Mrs. Elderton often called her two overgrown boobies of sons) now joined Miss Moore and Miss Bellingham, whom they overwhelmed with compliments, having been a whole week absent from Brighton on a visit to a friend at Hastings, which proved to be no other per-
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son, than the family of their old friend Billy Delany.

To their great surprize, Miss Delany seized hold of the hand of Miss Bellingham, which she would nearly have dislocated by her violent shakes, had not Lord Charles Wynne put an end to her congratulations, by accosting Miss Bellingham. As soon as, in the course of her answers, she mentioned "Your Lordship," Miss Delany fixed her eyes on him, and appeared fascinated, not opening her lips again, until some other ladies attracted the notice of Lord Charles, and he quitted the side of Helen; when Miss Delany exclaimed, "Well! is that the Lord? Why he looks no more like a Nobility than my brother Billy does. Mr. Deputy Saint, Esqr's. son, Tom, looks for all the world just like him. I dare say he is very rich. Won't you have him, Miss ——? I beg your pardon, but I forgot your name, it is so hard a one."

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“That is the reason you want me to exchange it, I suppose,” said Helen. “Bellingham will do very well for me at present.”

Lady Clifden espied Miss Delany with the Dalling party; and, summoning all her fashionable friends, first related the gala scene, with the loss of the wig, and then hurried them on to quiz the Lady Mayoress elect, as she called Mrs. Lavington’s visitor. She was glad to do so, as thus she could put her off as their acquaintance, instead of their introducing her as a particular and intimate connection of her own.

After many congratulations on her return, and enquiries where she had been rustivating all the last week, addressed to the widow, Lady Clifden recollected Miss Delany, with a “Lord! bless me, how stupid I am! is not this Miss Lany, the young lady who met with the provoking accident at Carleton?”

ton?" "The very same," replied Mrs. Lavington, "with only a small alteration as to the name. So as you are a forgetful lady, I will again introduce Miss Delany, the sister of your brother's intimate friend, whom you cannot have forgotten." "Oh no," answered her Ladyship curtsieing, and then Miss Allright put in a word. "Pray Miss Delany, how is this same brother of yours; he has had no more frolicks I hope? did he drive you to Brighton?" Every one was anxious to hear an account of the disasters of Miss and her brother; and Lady Clifden being in a most excellent humour to relate them, Mrs Lavington very opportunely saw some other friend, and carried Miss Delany off, that she might not suffer the mortification of being laughed at a second time, however, she saw by the laughing faces of the party, whenever curiosity prompted her to turn her head that way, that she

she had afforded infinite merriment to the fashionable party. She consoled herself as well as she could in the attentions of the elder Elderton, who remarked, that “ he found great folks were not wiser, or more polite than their neighbours, and that for his part, he should avoid such company in future. He thought at first when he came amongst them, that to be sure, being at court and talking to the king and queen and them sort of folks, might make them more polite than others, but indeed it had had quite the contrary effect on all he had known, for they seemed to mind no one but themselves, and to laugh at every one who did not belong to their own set.” Miss Delany wondered that Miss Allright could so far forget herself as to affect the fine lady so before her. She had a very good memory before Lord Clifden took pity on her, and if somebody or other did.

did not soon take pity on them both, her Ladyship would have little to laugh at soon, or she was much mistaken.

As soon as the Earl appeared, Mrs. Dalling again related her many misfortunes which greatly disconcerted him, as well as herself, as he feared that Sir James and his Lady would be particular observers of their daughter's conduct, and also that she would be more confined by attentions to the old folks.

He determined if possible to ingratiate himself into the favour of Sir James, to whom he was very well known. He was certain his son was not fond of his society, but if he could get an invitation from the father, he should then, as they lived only a few miles off each other, have an opportunity of frequently seeing her, who now engrossed all his thoughts and attention.

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Some days passed on in the same uniformity of seeking to be amused in a general hunt after something that was yet to come, to render them gayer and happier than they had yet been, when the long expected and ardently wished for letter arrived from Dr. Jackson, to Miss Moore.

“ Dear Madam,

“ No doubt but you have waited with impatience for an answer to your last letter, and I do assure you I have been equally concerned with yourself that I could not, before this day, reply to it so as to say any thing positive as to our dear and good young Lady.

“ I did as you advised ; wrote all the particulars relating to Miss Bellingham, and referred to the governess of the school, where she had been educated, for any information more than in my
own

own power to give. I sent my letter directed as desired, and heard no more from the party till yesterday, when a carriage came to my door, in which was a gentleman and lady in deep mourning, who desired to speak with me alone. They were shewn into the parlour, and after some little hesitation she said I am come, Sir, in hopes that it may be possible to induce you to tell me all you know concerning the dear child committed to your guardianship by Lady Eleanor Levet, for I am persuaded that you must have been more in the confidence of her Ladyship than perhaps you might chuse to commit to paper. Much depends on your being candid and explicit. She will lose nothing by the exchange of her situation; on the contrary she will meet a fond and indulgent parent, instead of being a dependant on the bounty of a capricious and unfeeling woman, as Lady Levet must have been, since

since she never saw Miss Bellingham as I am assured by the mistress of the school where she was educated. Had she been a mother (you will pardon me, Sir, for the suggestion, this could not have been so, situated as she was.—Here the lady shed many tears—She then said that she was at liberty to have visited privately the child of her heart—I am rather persuaded that she left her fortune to Miss Bellingham, in order to disappoint the present Earl of Clifden, who was a dissipated and thoughtless character, rather than that there was any affinity between them. Oh, Sir! do not hesitate to pronounce that I am right.

“ Here the Lady waited for a reply from me. I informed her with the most solemn asseverations that I knew no more than I then related to her; I also informed her of the nature of the will of her Ladyship. She then said, well, Sir, it is certainly a mysterious affair, but

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I believe the dear child belongs to me, as she was carried to the school by the very woman to whom my infant was entrusted, and whom I cannot now find or hear of. This is an almost convincing circumstance. Perhaps Lady Levett patronized the child from motives of humanity, hearing that it was deserted by its natural parents. Oh! had I, said she, never acted but by the impulse of my own feelings, these pangs had been spared me.

“ After a long pause she informed me that her name was Delmore, that she had married very young to Lord Delmore, who was at the time of her marriage at variance with a distant branch of his own family, and had sought an alliance with her, in hopes that by his union she might bring him an heir who would inherit his large estates, to the entire prejudice of his relations who had sprung from a female branch, and who
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at his time of life looked on his possessions as their own, his Lordship being upwards of fifty when he married. Her Ladyship said, that she was the youngest daughter of a numerous family, who all united in pressing her to accept so great an offer, to which she was rather averse considering the great disparity of years between his Lordship and herself. However, these objections she gave up to the importunities of friends, and the suggestions of female vanity. We were united, I received much attention from his Lordship, particularly as he found that his wishes were likely to be accomplished. At length the time of my confinement approached, when a violent fright I received caused me prematurely to bring forth a female child, which did not live but a few days. As soon as I recovered I could perceive a quite different behaviour from his Lordship: he was gloomy

gloomy and morose, and neglected those attentions to me which he had been used to pay. And frequently spoke of his severe disappointment, as his relations could hardly conceal their joy at a circumstance which promised vexation to him. I found that I was regarded in no other light than as I might fulfil the hopes of my husband in his scheme of revenge on his family, and was truly unhappy amidst the caresses and congratulations of my relations and friends, on my exalted station. I will not detain you, Sir, said Lady Delmore, with a recital of my unhappy state. The next year I was declared pregnant again, and my husband again resumed all his former attention, and expressed his hopes of not again meeting with a disappointment. All my family were now convinced that all my hopes of future peace with my husband rested on his having an heir. After
much

much conversation, my mother and father persuaded me to yield to their management this important affair, in case I should again bring forth a female child. They promised that she should be taken care of and amply provided for, and a male infant might be introduced, with my concurrence, which would secure me the affections of my husband, and the disposal of both money and patronage; both of which were wanted in my own family, I knew. I yielded to the tears of my mother, what my own judgement condemned, still hoping that a son might render all deception unnecessary. Every thing was arranged by my mother, and very little spoken to me on the subject after she had wrung my consent from me. A second daughter proved another disappointment to my wishes; but it was managed with so much secrecy and dexterity, that his Lordship was hailed
with

with congratulations on the birth of a fine boy on his return from hunting with my father; as it had been contrived so that I should be on a visit at home and not able to send for the same assistance, I had called on my former confinement. Unbounded joy took place in the bosom of his Lordship in which every part of my family partook, whilst I was absorbed in melancholy, which was easily concealed in my situation. My mother gave me every assurance that the child was carefully removed and well taken care of, and that it would be in my power amply to provide for her in future. As soon as I was able to be removed we went to our own house, where the most extravagant demonstrations of joy were displayed, and I ought to have been the happiest of mothers. Lord Delmore's regard daily increased, and I was consulted on every point. The child grew

and was admired by all—he was the idol of all the family. His Lordship lived but in the presence of his son; much uneasiness of mind caused my recovery not to be ~~so~~ soon accomplished: his Lordship was as affectionate and attentive to me now, as he had ben neglectful before, and feared least I should fall into a decline. The spring was far advanced, therefore he proposed our making a trip to the continent. I did not object, for had I done so, he was determined, as he had expressed some anxiety lest his relations should kidnap his darling son, as he believed them capable of any attempt to remove him out of the way. Not to detain you too long, Sir, said Lady Delmore, we went to Italy; the place where we resided, pleased his Lordship so much that he resolved to remain where we lived, for some years, as all the pride of ancient nobility was here carried to
its

its fullest extent ; and here he bred his son in those principles he had himself imbibed. I heard from my mother frequently, and had privately assurances that all was well in the quarter she knew I was most anxious about. During my stay abroad, I lost both my parents, and with them any knowledge of my dear child. We returned to England, and I privately made all the enquiries I durst in my circumstances, but could not hear any tidings of my dearest girl, and on our son's giving strong indications of a consumptive habit, we hurried to the South of France, and afterwards to our old residence in Italy, where, after two years stay, Lord Delmore's hopes were buried with his son. I had no more children, nor was likely to have any, which rendered his Lordship both melancholy and morose : he avoided all company. But he declared against

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visiting

visiting England, where his family would soon, he said, be extinct, and he did not chuse to witness the exultation of those relatives who would inherit his title and fortune without having one drop of the blood of the Delmores in their veins.

“ I lived a secluded and melancholy life with his Lordship, who had long deprived me of any respect or esteem for him ; and I now considered in what way I could repair the injury I had been led to offer to my dear girl if she was living. I thought of this as his Lordship’s health was in a declining state, and my parents, who had been actors in the deception, were no more ;—the opinion of the world was nothing to them. I myself would have braved any dangers to relieve my mind of a burthen that hung heavily on it. I got a common friend to impart the truth to my husband, who did not receive

ceive the intelligence with that degree of resentment I had at first apprehended. Suffice it to say, he forgave me the deception, and now strove all in his power to find out our own dear child. This proved ineffectual during his life time; but he took care in his will to establish her right as his heiress, so strongly that it was impossible to dispute it. When I lost his Lordship, about a year ago, I used all possible means again to find out the woman who had taken my child, but all in vain. At length an old woman was found, who related, that such a child had been sent to school, to Mrs. Linworth's, and she had heard Margaret Shaw say, she might be a great lady some time or other.

“With great joy I hastened to the school, where I was told the story of Miss Bellingham's being adopted by

Lady Levet, and referred to you, Sir, for more particulars.

“ The gentleman, who I found was a brother of her Ladyship's, said that they should rely on the information I might give, and either give up or persist in their investigation, as far as the present young Lady was concerned, upon what light I could throw on the subject. I gave them all the little information in my power, and assured them that it would give me a sincere and heart-felt satisfaction to elucidate the present mystery so as to place Miss Bellingham under the protection of a parent who seemed so amiable, and also anxious to receive her. We compared all circumstances and dates as far as we were able. Lady Delmore demonstrated to me to a certainty, that the same person to whom the care of her infant was committed, had delivered Miss Bellingham to the person
who

who brought her to Harrowby, and placed her, by the direction of Lady Eleanor Levet, with Mrs. Linworth. Does this not point to this being Lady Delmore's child? Yet her Ladyship says, that she does not know that her family, and that of the late Earl of Clifden were ever on a footing of intimacy; or, I should have thought the circumstance might have been communicated in confidence to Lady Eleanor, who feeling for the poor little infant, so deprived of its birth-right, might have determined to adopt and bring her up, as her own natural pride of family would revolt at a surreptitious child inheriting the title and honours of an antient and honourable house.

“I must own, that I rather give in to the idea that Lady Delmore is the mother of our dear young Lady. I sought for a resemblance between them, and actually think that I can trace some features,

features, that, on comparison, and allowing for the difference of age, bear an affinity; but I may be mistaken. I would not say this to any of the parties concerned, as I would not mislead them. Is it not very strange that the nurse nor any of her family can be found? Margaret Shaw, the person who committed Miss Bellingham to Mrs. Linworth's care is dead, so is her husband; but the person who gave this information, says she knew that Margaret Shaw did not nurse the child, and being very old, has forgotten the names of those that did. She thinks that they went to London, but cannot be at all accurate, often contradicting herself; so that her evidence should be cautiously believed.

“ You have told me, my dear madam, that Lady Levet never spoke more, as to Miss Bellingham, to you, than that she had a sincere regard and respect
for

for her parents. Did she say they were dead?—I cannot believe her Ladyship would, utter a falsehood, at any period, much less at that awful one, when she was about to quit this world, in the hope of being admitted to be a partaker of a better.

“I think it will be proper that you should meet Lady Delmore if it is for nothing more than to put an end to the anxiety of a parent, who, owning that she has committed an error, wishes to make all the reparation possible to a beloved child. I have promised to give you the meeting whenever you and Miss Bellingham, who, no doubt, is very anxious for it, will appoint.

“Lady Delmore asked if it was not possible to examine the papers before the time proposed by Lady Levet was expired, as there was no penalty annexed for so doing. I could not answer

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